Queer CanLit

CANADIAN LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER (LGBT) LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

An Exhibition Curated by Scott Rayter, Donald W. McLeod, and Maureen FitzGerald

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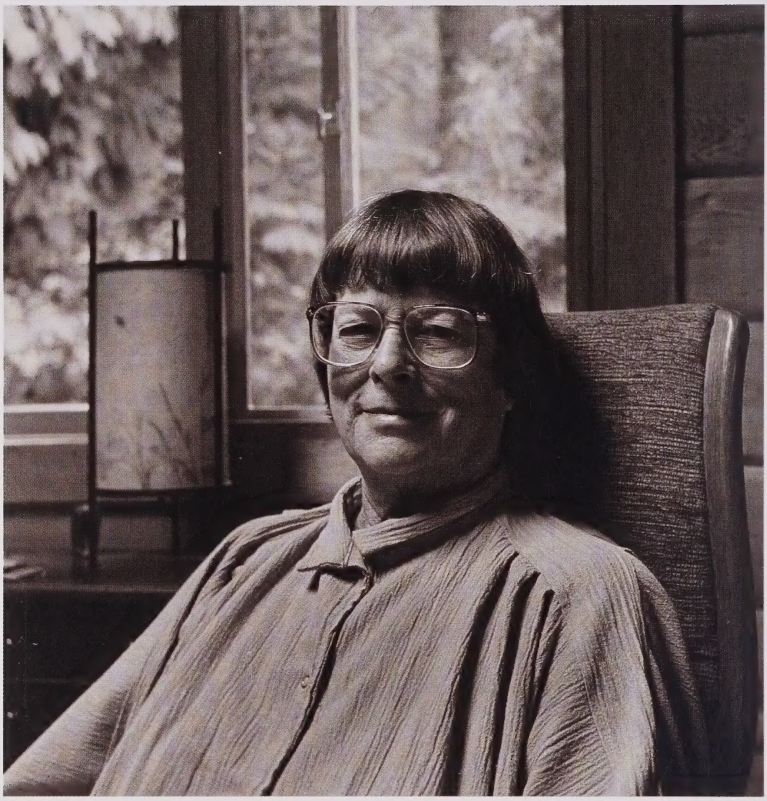

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This exhibition is dedicated to Jane Rule (1931–2007).

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Scott Rayter, Donald W. McLeod, and Maureen FitzGerald

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies

University of Toronto

9 June – 29 August 2008

ISBN 978-0-7727-6065-4

Catalogue and exhibition by Scott Rayter, Donald W. McLeod, and Maureen FitzGerald
General editor P.J. Carefoote
Exhibition installed by Linda Joy
Digital photography by Bogda Mickiewicz and Paul Armstrong
Catalogue designed by Stan Bevington
Catalogue printed by Coach House Press, Toronto

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Rayter, Scott, 1970–*
Queer CanLit : Canadian lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) literature in English : an exhibition / by Scott Rayter, Donald W. McLeod, and Maureen FitzGerald.

"Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, 9 June–29 August 2008."
Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-7727-6065-4

1. Gays' writings, Canadian (English)–Exhibitions.
2. Bisexuals' writings, Canadian (English)–Exhibitions.
3. Transgender people's writings, Canadian (English)–Exhibitions.
4. Canadian literature (English)–20th century–Bibliography–Exhibitions.
I. McLeod, Donald W. (Donald Wilfred), 1957–
II. FitzGerald, Maureen, 1942–
III. Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
IV. Title.

PS8089.5.G38R39 2008 016.8108'092066 C2008-901963-6

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Foreword

The University of Toronto recognizes, and emphasizes, its diversity, as does the wider community. It was not always so, and throughout the history of Canada many groups of people whose lifestyles have deviated from the mainstream have recognized themselves as marginalized, and the objects of discrimination. For the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community, literature, published in many different formats, has been an enormously important means of communication, and the extent of its creation and proliferation is astonishing. The books and pamphlets in this exhibition visibly testify to this diversity with their common theme, but they often have something else they share: they are scarce and sometimes 'rare.' As Scott Rayter points out, many of these works have been ignored, censored, and largely forgotten. Fortunately for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community it has had in its midst the collectors and archivists, such as Ian Young, who have preserved these records, and the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives have been the recipients of material that could easily have been lost to posterity.

The combination of human creativity and the printing press has proven to be powerful in the creation of our culture. It is a privilege to share with the whole community this unusual collection and offer congratulations to the organizers and creators of this exhibition and catalogue.

Richard Landon
Director
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
University of Toronto

Queer CanLit: Canadian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Literature in English

Scott Rayter

Introduction

In their film *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives* (1992), directors Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman interview a number of women about their experiences of lesbian culture in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal during the 1940s through the 1960s. In one scene, Reva Hutkin recalls how she and her lover did themselves up in their best butch and femme and drove to New York, seeking out Greenwich Village in particular, 'to look for the lesbians' they had read about in the lesbian pulp novels of the day, only to lament that '[t]hey just weren't there. I don't know. Or we couldn't find them. Or we didn't recognize them because they weren't wearing butch and femme!' as they did in the novels.[1] Although told in a humorous manner, the incident speaks profoundly to the ways in which queer lives have been shaped, for better or worse, by the books we read. Reading and writing have been important political acts for queer people, as they have been for other minority and marginalized groups, and have been useful tools in negotiating identity and the world around us. Through those queer texts we protest, celebrate, bear witness, experience community, and get turned on.

This exhibition, which makes use of the wealth of Canadian literature holdings in the collections of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, is an attempt to showcase a sampling of queer English-Canadian literature in the categories of poetry, fiction, and drama. Although our list is by no means exhaustive, or indeed fully representative of the diversity of material both in and outside the Fisher and CLGA collections, we have put together an exhibition that speaks to the broad range of imaginative queer written material in this country. In this essay, then, we will discuss not only the process by which we came to our decisions about which works to include, but also the larger issues involved in any literary history or canon-building project.[2] With the recent successes in Canadian courts and Parliament over same-sex rights and recognitions, and at a moment when the academy appears deeply suspicious of any attempt to stabilize or essentialize categories of identity, one might ask, why now? Are these kinds of (rainbow) flag-waving exercises at best naïve? More to the point, perhaps, are they even necessary anymore?

Like other recent interrogations of the underlying ideology and methodology behind the creation of a 'CanLit' canon,[3] our project is based on a deep awareness of how power has operated in Canadian literary history. Power influences the way texts are published, read, reviewed, and placed on curricula; certain works (and hence identities and communities) have received a great deal of attention and achieved canonical status. Others, deemed marginal or unimportant, have been ignored, ridiculed, censored, and forgotten. A certain number of important queer works and writers have acquired high status and a place at the 'centre' of Canadian literature, but often they are read and lauded in ways that ignore or universalize the queer sexualities and identities they represent, explore, and question. Most versions of the Canadian literary canon would

include Marie-Claire Blais, Michel Marc Bouchard, Dionne Brand, Nicole Brossard, Timothy Findley, Tomson Highway, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Erin Mouré, Sinclair Ross, and Michel Tremblay, and yet it is legitimate to ask why so many other writers in this exhibition are not better known. This exhibition is not simply about revisiting old (though necessary) debates about centre and margin; it is also about looking at what becomes of certain texts or authors once they do achieve a place at the 'centre.'

That said, this exhibition is also about celebrating and drawing attention to works that revel in their status on the margins, or challenge the very category of the 'literary.' We have included 'zines, which have always existed and circulated beneath the radar—indeed that is part of their allure, and their power—as well as erotic works and genre fiction, such as fantasy, thrillers, detective novels, and science fiction. We have also included an important work of children's literature, *Asha's Moms* (Rosamund Elwin and Michele Paulse, 1990), the subject of much controversy and a legal battle with the Surrey School Board in British Columbia, as an example of queer work written for children and young adults.[4]

Que(e)rying the Nation

In 'Sexualities and National Identities: Re-Imagining Queer Nationalism,' L. Pauline Rankin examines a pivotal moment in queer Canadian history (1967):

> [...] Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau's now-famous comment that the 'state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation.' Trudeau's statement signalled a relaxation of attitudes towards homosexuality on the part of the Canadian state, as well as the adoption of legal reforms, including the decriminalisation of homosexual activity [1969]. But his comments also reflected a social consensus that assigned matters of sexuality to the realm of the private sphere, effectively excluding such issues from the public domain. Despite the federal government's apparent liberalisation of policies around homosexuality, then, as now, the construction and maintenance of pan-Canadian nationalism demanded that the state remain keenly interested in what was happening in the bedrooms of its citizens. In fact, the project of defining national identities in Canada has always involved significant attention to the regulation of the sexual preferences and practices of Canadians.[5]

Contrary to the argument, then, that sexuality is a private matter, one that has little to do with national concerns, Rankin, along with many other scholars, looks at the important role that the discourse around gender and sexuality has played in the formation of the Canadian nation and Canadian identity (which, as we will see, has important implications for writing about queer Canadian literary history). Other scholars, such as Ann Laura Stoler and Anne McClintock, have examined how the policing and management of sex and gender were fundamental to colonial projects around the world. Sexuality, not simply in the form of violence, was key to establishing and maintaining colonial power. Heteronormativity is writ large, for example, in the practice of concubinage (domestic arrangements exclusive of marriage), which allowed the colonial authority to settle and expand the population of the colonies, secure domestic labour, facilitate trade, promote a 'healthy' lifestyle (by keeping prostitution to a minimum, and reducing the spread of syphilis), and prevent men from having "'unnatural"

liaisons with one another.'[6] The legacy of colonial sexual practices can obviously be seen in the mixed-race populations of First Nations and Métis peoples living in Canada today, as well as in the abuses suffered in residential schools, and in the ongoing violence against Aboriginal women.

A number of writers presented in this exhibition explore the relationship between Aboriginality and sexuality, not only in connection to past—and present—abuses, but also in the way they work to overcome shame, reclaim the body, and articulate and celebrate sexuality on their own terms. Tomson Highway, for example, uses the trickster figure, and its potential for subversive gender and sexual play, to explore two-spirit sexuality and enact a kind of healing for the characters in his novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998). Such imaginings work against the implicit heterosexism (which relies on a rigid gender system) of colonial practices used to eradicate the 'broad range of gender and erotic relationships [that] existed among Aboriginal populations at early contact.'[7] This is a concept also explored in Daniel David Moses's two one-act plays *The Indian Medicine Shows* (1995). Gregory Scofield uses animal and nature images from Aboriginal mythology and oral storytelling, along with Cree language, to articulate a lyrical and sexual poetry in *Love Medicine and One Song = Sâkihtowin-Maskihkiy Êkwa Pêyak-Nikamowin* (1997). If these male writers explore 'gay' sexuality and interrogate masculinity in their works (also see Scofield's *Thunder Through My Veins: Memories of a Métis Childhood*, 1999), lesbian writers such as Beth Brant (who also incorporates two-spirit trickster figures in her fiction and poetry) and Connie Fife take up the particular histories and contemporary issues surrounding Aboriginal female sexuality in their search for a language that works against the discourse and history of patriarchal and colonial exploitation of their bodies.[8]

If sexuality in the texts by First Nations writers is expressed in ways specific to their cultural history (and histories), works in this exhibition by non-Aboriginals also bear witness to other struggles queer people have experienced in Canada. And while we don't want to view the literature didactically—as simply a means to an end—we cannot ignore the polemical nature of some of the texts. A poet such as Edward Lacey (one of many self-exiled writers) wrote virulently in his work about the sexual hypocrisy and small-mindedness of this country during the 1950s and 1960s. In his poem 'Saudade,' Lacey writes of the voice that calls him home: 'reviens, come back, reviens'

> [...] to the bleak barless streets of small Ontario and Alberta towns, [...]
> to my restaurants where a man can't have a drink,
> to my bars where a man can't get a meal,
> to my 'beverage rooms' where a man can't stand to drink,
> to my taverns where a man can't lift his voice to sing,
> to my laws, my laws, my endless rule of law,
> my 'don't, can't, mustn't, shouldn't, may not'.
> Come back to the Criminal Code, to the Provincials, to the RCMP,
> to the Morality Squads, to a nation of policemen, [...]
> come back, above all, to Sunday, drinkless asexual church-going
> Sunday, day of the dead in the cities of the dead.
> Come back to hockey, to rugby, to the Gray [sic] cup, and to teenagers
> and farmers who would rather curl than copulate.[9]

According to Robert K. Martin and others, the reaction to Scott Symons's 1967 novel *Place d'Armes* was nothing less than homophobic—Robert Fulford called him 'the most repellent single figure in the recent history of Canadian writing'[10]—leading Symons to flee with his lover 'to Mexico, pursued by the Canadian embassy and the Mexican police.'[11] Abandoning Canada because of hostility to their work, or due to the belief that audiences and culture were more hospitable elsewhere, is not unique to queer writers. Any serious examination of Canadian literary history must account for the fact that many authors we claim as our own either lived or did a lot of their writing abroad, including Leonard Cohen, Mavis Gallant, Margaret Laurence, and Mordecai Richler.[12] Indeed, Cohen and Laurence also experienced extreme reactions to the portrayals of sexuality in their work (as did Marian Engel for her 1977 novel *Bear*), thus occupying a space typically reserved for queer people. Still others, included in the Pioneers section, such as Patrick Anderson and Robert Finch, received critical reviews of their work that called into question their moral character, which led to, among other things, the marginalization of their writing by subsequent literary historians.

More recent works speak to the fact that simply changing laws doesn't necessarily end injustice. Robin Fulford's play *Steel Kiss* (performed 1987; published 1991) was inspired by the murder of a gay man in Toronto's High Park in 1985. (Michael Lewis MacLennan's 2002 play *The Shooting Stage* also deals with bullying and gay-bashing.) Peter McGehee's novel *Sweetheart* (1992; the sequel to *Boys Like Us*, 1991, included in this exhibition) looks at the rise—and legitimization—of homophobia and homophobic violence since the appearance of AIDS. In particular, he makes reference to Dr. Richard Schabas, Ontario's chief medical officer of health from 1987 to 1997, who, as David tells Zero, 'has recommended that the Minister of Health reclassify AIDS as a virulent disease,' which means '[t]hat the government could forcibly detain people with AIDS up to four months without a trial. [...] Dr. Schabas also said any seropositive who continued to have sex, safe or otherwise, should be quarantined. Which would include all of us.'[13] Susan Cole's play *A Fertile Imagination* (performed in 1991 and included here in Rosalind Kerr's *Lesbian Plays: Coming of Age in Canada*, 2006) examines the struggles of a lesbian couple trying to conceive a child, which is never simply a private matter. As Rankin writes (in 2000),

> [i]n contrast to developing states, where lesbian sexuality often has been criminalised because of its non-procreative nature, legislatures in Canada currently are scrambling to regulate the reproduction and child-rearing of lesbians and their partners in myriad ways, including restricted access to new reproductive technologies. Despite numerous legal victories, much vulnerability remains for lesbians and their families within an environment dominated by the masculinist heterosexualised scripts that still inform Canadian nationalism.[14]

Writers such as Connie Fife, and those included in Makeda Silvera's *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology* (1991), name and speak out against the homophobia some women experience in their particular racial and ethnic communities, as well as the racism they encounter in white queer communities. Ian Iqbal Rashid's collection of poems *Black Markets, White Boyfriends and Other Acts of Elision* (1991) makes the reader aware that any examination of race or sexuality must include an analysis of both.

Que(e)rying Literary History

The practice of inclusion and exclusion, of course, is central to the way literary history has been traditionally carried out. As Linda Hutcheon reminds us,

> [t]he versions of the story of the past told by the present have always been associated with questions of cultural authority and, thus, politics, especially some kind of 'identity' politics. Since the nineteenth century, the identity has most often been national, and so the accounts of the history of the nation's literature have played a significant role in the formation of certain national self-imaginings.[15]

In what ways, then, has Canadian literary history been predicated on the marginalization of 'other' voices? Indeed, to think about literary history in Canada, one must account for three very different traditions—First Nations, French, and English—each with its own purpose, history (or histories), and imagined future.[16] When it comes to queer literary history, however, we are sometimes speaking of two different (if not unrelated) projects: queering the canon as it already exists and arguing for the inclusion of marginalized voices. Following the first approach, Robert K. Martin provides one such reading:

> A current of homoeroticism, or what American critic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called 'male homosocial desire,' has been present in Canadian fiction at least since John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832): the note of Gothic terror throughout that novel is induced as much by the unknown nature of same-sex relationships as it is by the unknowable in nature itself. Indeed, *Wacousta* might be seen to inaugurate something of a 'counter-syndrome' in Canadian fiction, a triangular paradigm where, in texts as diverse as M[artin] A[llerdale] Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West* (1908), [Frederick Philip] Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), [Howard] O'Hagan's *Tay John* (1939), [Ernest] Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952), [Hugh] MacLennan's *The Watch That Ends the Night* (1959), and [Leonard] Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966), male characters displace their love for each other—and their nation—on to women whom they symbolically shame, or else on to a mythically feminized landscape. [...] Like Cohen, Hubert Aquin gives such a homoerotic triangle a postmodern sexually explicit twist in *Trou de mémoire* (1968 [trans. as *Blackout* by Alan Brown in 1974]).[17]

Other critics have followed this approach of queerly reading texts produced by non-queer writers. Peter Dickinson, in his important study *Here Is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada* (1999), expands upon the notion of homosocial triangles to interpret a number of canonical Canadian texts (including some in the above list) in ways that challenge the heteronormative tradition in which they have previously been read. In *Pink Snow: Homotextual Possibilities in Canadian Fiction* (2003), Terry Goldie also provides queer readings of some of those works discussed by Martin and Dickinson, but adds Robertson Davies's *Fifth Business* (1970) and W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* (1947). According to Douglas Chambers, 'the most powerful piece of Canadian homoeroticism is in the first chapter of *The English Patient* (1992) by the straight novelist Michael Ondaatje'[18]—an odd claim to make, perhaps, about what is an avowedly heterosexual, and beautifully romantic, love story.

Moreover, Count László Almásy, the real figure on whom the 'English patient' was partially based, was known to be bisexual, an aspect of his life the author never explores.[19] How are our 'shared' stories thus dependent on suppressing, rewriting, or excluding more subversive narratives?

Other heterosexual Canadian writers, however, have been more explicit in their treatment of same-sex sexuality. Morley Callaghan's novella *No Man's Meat* (1931; published in France because of its sexual content) includes an early example of lesbian representation, in which a man wins a bet from a female gambler that would entitle him to sleep with her, but instead the man's wife 'collects' the bet and the two women run off together. His son Barry Callaghan, in 'The Black Queen' (from *The Black Queen Stories*, 1982), provides a look at an aging gay couple, asking us to read them in the context of Callaghan's other depictions of marginalized and disenfranchised characters. Martha Ostenso (and Douglas Durkin)'s *Wild Geese* (1925) depicts a strong female intimacy that one might call homoerotic between the schoolteacher Lind and the beautiful, and rather masculine, Judith. Eschewing 'positive gay representation,' Robertson Davies, in *The Rebel Angels* (1981; the first book in the Cornish Trilogy), provides readers with an anti-hero, John Parlabane, a gay ex-monk who believes that gay liberationists got it all wrong by trying to remove the 'filth' from homosexuality. The realization that two of the men with whom she worked one summer as an adolescent might have been lovers forces the narrator of Alice Munro's 'The Turkey Season' (from *The Moons of Jupiter*, 1982) to rethink everything she thought she knew about that period in her life.

The 'gay best friend' motif receives treatment in a number of key Canadian works. Margaret Atwood's character Moira, in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), is a lesbian who would rather work as a prostitute than be a handmaid like Offred in a dystopic, heteropatriarchal world that values women only in terms of their ability to reproduce. Atwood's *The Robber Bride* (1993) also contains a small gay subplot in relation to one of the main characters' sons, though it could also be suggested that there is an unexamined theme of lesbian attraction and repulsion in the way the three protagonists relate to the 'villainess' Zenya. Margaret Gibson's 'Making It' (from *The Butterfly Ward*, 1976) examines the relationship between a woman struggling with mental illness and her drag queen best friend (based on the late Craig Russell, who also starred in the important Canadian film adaptation, *Outrageous!*, directed by Richard Benner in 1977). Margaret Laurence, in *A Jest of God* (1966), includes a rather panicked kiss between the heroine, Rachel, and Calla, her schoolteacher colleague, who is portrayed in sympathetic—if sad and lonely—terms (somewhat similar to Larry's friend and neighbour in Carol Shields's *Larry's Party*, 1997). Hugh Hood's *Dead Men's Watches* (1995), the tenth book in the New Age series, sees Matthew Goderich confront his own homophobia (perhaps in a rather clunky manner) as he cares for his friend Adam, who is in the final stages of AIDS. Richard B. Wright, in *Clara Callan* (2001), provides an extremely well-rounded and compelling lesbian character in Hollywood screenwriter Evelyn Dowling, and situates her life within the sexual politics of the day, in a novel that also examines rape, abortion, adultery, and single motherhood in 1930s small-town Ontario. In *Isobel Gunn* (1999), novelist Audrey Thomas was inspired by the fascinating life of a cross-dressing woman from the Orkneys who came to what was then called Rupert's Land in 1806. Susan Swan's *The Wives of Bath* (1993) takes a comic and

quirky approach to sexual and gender identity in an all-girls' school in the 1960s. Barbara Gowdy has also taken up queer sexuality and transgender issues in her work, most notably in the novel *Mister Sandman* (1995).

Other scholars have provided queer readings of the female friendships in the works and lives of Mazo de la Roche[20] and Pauline Johnson[21]; however, it was the scholarship of Laura Robinson, in a paper delivered at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Edmonton in May 2000,[22] that caused quite a controversy when she suggested that the female bonds in Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), and subsequent novels, were stronger than any heterosexual romantic attachments the heroine had. Given the reaction in Prince Edward Island and the salacious national coverage in the *Edmonton Journal*, *Globe and Mail*, *Maclean's*, *National Post*, and *Ottawa Citizen*, as well as on the CBC and CNN,[23] it was as though Robinson had committed an act of hate speech—as though suggesting Anne might have lesbian tendencies were a terrible thing to say about a person (or fictional character!). Cecily Devereux summarizes:

> *Anne of Green Gables* is an important English-Canadian novel precisely because it has proven to be so popular that it has become a national icon. Anne is 'our Anne' and what her narrative encodes is the national community that continues to be imagined for English Canada. The recent 'Bosom Friends' affair [...] brought this nationalist function home with tremendous clarity. It was not what was in the book that was as much at stake as what her sexuality signified for the nation's identification and self-representation, what the analysis said about 'us.'[24]

What would be the reaction (and national re-imagining), for example, if one were to read as a love poem Canada's most iconic lyric (now printed on the ten-dollar bill), 'In Flanders Fields,' written by John McCrae in 1915 the day after he witnessed the death of his friend Alexis Helmer?

> We are the Dead. Short days ago
> We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
> Loved, and were loved, and now we lie
> In Flanders fields.

If a queer thematic has always existed in Canadian literature, we nevertheless have not included the above-mentioned texts in the exhibition, but still draw attention to them in order to suggest other possible groupings than the one we have opted for. In those works, same-sex sexuality is not really the focus of the text, though it is an important undercurrent. For the most part, we have included works that are explicit about same-sex sexuality (it is not reduced to a marginal subplot nor does it exist only in coded form), and/or works that we believe have been important in the development of a queer literary history. Most of the works we present here have been penned by queer-identified authors, though this assertion requires some qualification, as we will see in the Pioneers section. And while we don't want to make essentialist claims that only queer writers produce 'authentic' queer texts, this exhibition is not shy about celebrating the achievements of queer writers (and not just works that have a queer component), since many of these writers have received far less attention and scholarly treatment than those discussed above.

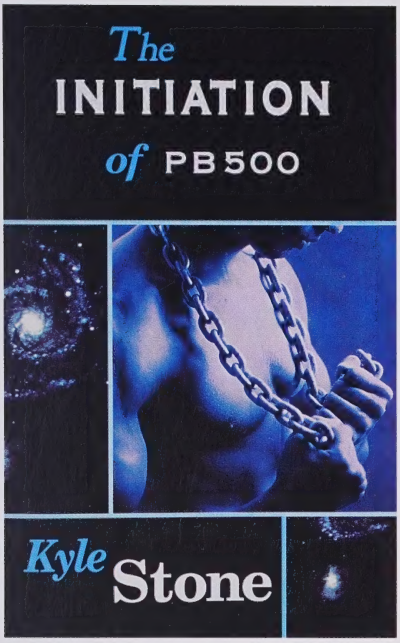
Ultimately, however, we want the focus to be on the works themselves. We have therefore not included a number of queer writers (self-identified or not) who haven't written explicitly about sexual diversity, and we have included some straight-identified writers who have produced work that is direct in its exploration of queerness and have treated it in unique ways. For example, Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse* (1998) is featured as a stunning example of a postmodern reworking of a classical text, the lost Tale of Geryon by the Greek poet Stesichorus. Here, Carson examines the turbulent love affair between Herakles and the red-winged monster Geryon, whom Herakles was said to have killed. Robin Fulford's depiction of a fatal gay-bashing in *Steel Kiss* (1991) provides theatregoers with a disturbing look into the actions of young men who kill, and where their hate comes from, while at the same time forcing that audience to bear witness to the violence to which queer people are often subjected. We are also featuring a work by Caro Soles, '[t]he best selling *gay* author in Canada [...,] a heterosexual woman who lives in the suburbs of Toronto and writes explicit novels under the pseudonym Kyle Stone.'[25] She has also edited a number of anthologies, such as the gay erotic fantasy collection *Bizarre Dreams* (1994), which includes Timothy Findley's 'The Dead Can Dance: A Gothic Tale.' Interestingly, Soles has said in an interview that she began her first explicitly gay text, *The Initiation of PB500* (1993, rpt. 2001; included here), after being turned down by Harlequin (Canada's most commercially successful publisher) because of the minor gay content of her earlier submissions: 'It's structured like a Harlequin with lots of the same sort of thing in it—idealized physical stuff etc., but that's where the similarity ends. I placed it on another planet so I could do anything. And I did! It still sells very well and is popular with the gay S&M crowd.'[26] On the other hand, we have not included any work by Douglas Coupland, for example, who has now 'come out' but hasn't necessarily been writing gay or queer fiction, though one could argue for a coming-out subplot in *Microserfs* (1995) or a minor gay character who is HIV-positive in *Miss Wyoming* (1999). It bears thinking about in greater detail whether we now read those earlier texts of Coupland (and others) in a different way, knowing as we do the 'truth' about his sexuality. For some, does knowing his sexual orientation jeopardize his role as spokesperson for all Gen-Xers? Will others think he has a certain responsibility to represent queer people? Will any new work be judged, consciously or not, by a different set of standards and expectations?

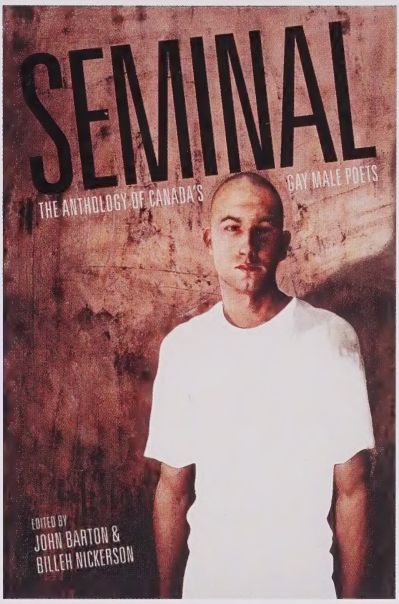
Que(e)rying Identity

The example of Douglas Coupland, of course, raises the age-old issue about what it means to be a 'gay writer.' As John Barton tells us in the introduction to *Seminal: The Anthology of Canada's Gay Male Poets* (ed. with Billeh Nickerson, 2007),

> [i]t seems less interesting nowadays to consider what legitimately constitutes a gay poem or whether someone is a 'gay poet' versus a 'poet who happens to be gay.' The time to feel diminished or emboldened by labels—or to feel one should trumpet, duck, whistle around, or deny them (strategies that all imply hubris, anxiety, or discomfort)—should be long over.[27]

Nevertheless, those labels did matter when putting together *Seminal*, since a





number of writers (or their estates) refused to grant permission to have their poetry included.[28] Alas, this brings up the very problem of creating an exhibition such as ours in the first place. What is to be gained by placing these works together? What is being excluded from view by looking at the works solely in terms of queerness? Indeed, this is a key concern in many of the works included here: What does identity mean, and how does one negotiate, celebrate, and refute the very categories in which one is placed? How does the label gay or queer compete with, overshadow, or render invisible other identities (and vice versa)?

This is where a queer approach is useful, since it allows us to think critically about identities as discursive. We use *queer*, then, in the way both activists and academics initially deployed it in the 1990s. Reclaiming what had once been a hateful epithet, 'queer' signalled a new way of thinking about sexuality and identity as constructed categories, which is not to say, as some mistakenly believe, that human beings themselves are simply constructs who lack agency. Following Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, '[o]ur approach views sexuality as socially constructed, that is, created by human actors in culturally and historically conditioned ways.'[29] 'Queer' became a way of talking about sexuality that properly distinguished between acts and identities (building on the work of Michel Foucault and others), moving us away, for example, from ahistorical literary histories (and early literary anthologies) that presented 'gayness' as some universal, timeless experience. And yet this practice is typical of 'interventionist' literary histories written by minorities, as Linda Hutcheon reminds us (quoting Michael Lowenthal):

> They have often exaggerated their antiquity to conceal their newness: 'The past is always altered for motives that reflect present need.... Rendered grand or homely, magnified or tarnished, history is continually altered in our private interests or on behalf of our community or

country.' The 'imagined community' of the nation is frequently based as much on shared 'forgetting' as on shared nostalgic 'memory.'[30]

Thinking queerly, then, allows us to historicize identity and be suspicious of essentialist claims and master narratives that naturalize power for certain groups, typically at the expense of others who must necessarily be excluded. If 'queer' once offered a critique of heteronormativity, it now also seems to be the umbrella, 'inclusive' term for gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/transsexual/two-spirit, ideally without implying a levelling of difference (and hierarchy) amongst those terms. A number of the writers included here would not identify (first) as queer, nor would a number of them necessarily call all the texts here 'queer.' Indeed, we hope that by placing these works (and authors) together, we do create a frisson of sorts and, more importantly, a dialogue. What we have created, then, is simply one version or narrative (written from our particular positions in the present) that likely will look very different in the future. In short, what visitors encounter here is provisional, unstable, paradoxical, more disruptive than conclusive—in other words, queer.

Que(e)rying Translation

One of the things that sets this project apart from other attempts at queer literary history has been our refusal to divide the works purely along linguistic and gender lines. Literary histories in Canada consistently discuss French and English works separately, and most queer literary histories focus on either gay or lesbian works, but seldom together. And while this exhibition is based on English-Canadian texts, we have included quite a number of French works in translation that we believe have been important to a queer English literary tradition. One simply could not speak of such a tradition without accounting for the profound influence that Michel Tremblay's plays have had on other gay writers (and on Canadian theatre more broadly), just as the work of Marie-Claire Blais and Nicole Brossard has been essential to lesbian and non-lesbian writers in the rest of the country. Nevertheless, it does appear rather colonial to include Québécois works only insofar as they are recognized and acknowledged by English Canada. More to the point, it seems we are translating the 'other' into an economy of the same, as though what they have to say to us only matters if they say it in a way we want or are able to hear it—a tactic that has particular historical resonance in this country. Such a move may not just seem misguided, but indeed ignores the way language is central to the very politics and aesthetics of many of these Québécois works (e.g., *joual* in Tremblay's plays); from this perspective to present them in English is to stifle or at least to muffle or tame those voices.

We would like to suggest, however, that there is another way of thinking about the subject. As Brossard has said in an interview,

> I see translation as a kind of passage. When we write we make a passage from reality to fiction; and when we read we make a passage from fiction to our reality. Translation is another kind of passage, which is a transformation. Translation is exciting for me because it is movement in meaning and is therefore at the core of how we create meaning, challenge it, or transform it. That is why it has become the theme, the reality of *Mauve Desert* [1990; trans. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, and included in this exhibit].[31]

In the poetic dialogue created between Brossard and Daphne Marlatt, for example, the latter refers to 'the intimacy of the experience of translation.'[32] Nathalie Stephens is another poet whose work examines the politics of language; although she does not translate her own work, she produces texts in both English and French. Robert Lepage and Marie Brassard's *Polygraph* (1997)[33] looks at the lives of three characters in Montreal, including David, a Berliner who does not speak French and must constantly have things translated for him. Lepage's 'plays are resolutely multilingual, transnational in scope and sensibility, incorporating English and French and at least one other tongue as well as the nonverbal languages of performance.'[34] Foregrounding the relationship between form and content, *Polygraph* examines the status of truth, knowledge, and reality by the way characters use language to negotiate space and identity. To exclude Québécois works from this exhibit, then, would be to ignore an important aspect of queer Canadian literary history in English. Critic Patricia Smart writes, for example, about the way '[f]eminist fiction-theory—that special blend of grounded theory propelled by the imagination and by the urgency of transforming the real—' has allowed for a 'cross-fertilization between the two cultures [...] because the commonality provided by gender allowed us to transcend our national or cultural differences without attempting in any way to abolish them.'[35]

Que(e)rying Gender

The connection between language and gender is thus explicit, particularly as it is explored not only by Nicole Brossard, but also by Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland, both individually and in their collaborative work, represented here by *Two Women in a Birth* (1994). Erin Mouré, Gail Scott, and Nathalie Stephens have been influenced by French feminist thought, and engage in dialogue with Québécois voices in their works (a conversation that has often taken place in the pages of *Tessera*). Trish Salah, an anglophone poet and academic, in *Wanting in Arabic* (2002), also addresses the issue of *écriture féminine* and what it means for someone not born biologically a woman, but now living as one, to take up and reclaim what for many can seem like an essentialist model for thinking about language and gender. Brossard makes an important distinction, however, between *écriture féminine* and *écriture au féminin*:

> What we call *'l'écriture au féminin'* has been produced somehow through a form which we could call 'the text.' In fact, *'l'écriture au féminin'* has generated texts of a hybrid nature that feature brief narrative interventions with poetic resonances. It is a space where one can simultaneously express, remember, question and provoke.'[36]

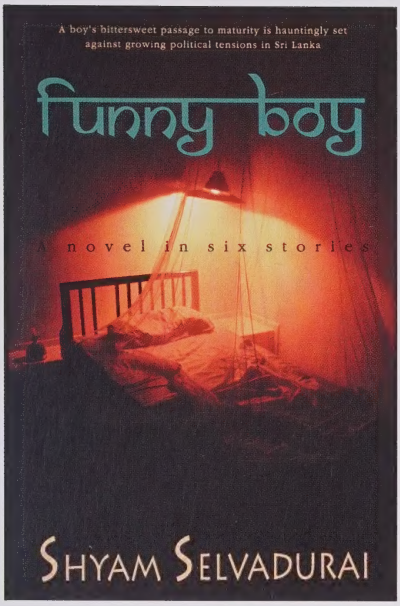
To *be* lesbian or female, then, cannot be separated from the language and other forms of representation used to enact those subject positions. Ivan E. Coyote, part of the Taste This collective that put together *Boys Like Her: Transfictions* (1998)—what we might call a 'hybrid' text—has repeatedly said in interviews that when it comes to the terms *he* and *she*, those are words that other people seem to need to categorize the author, and mean little in terms of Coyote's own self-identification. Indeed, the very difficulty of finding the words for those who reject or don't fit into traditional gender binaries leaves us searching for a language that might begin to articulate human subjectivity in entirely different ways. And yet some writers insist such a language already exists. As Tomson Highway tells us,

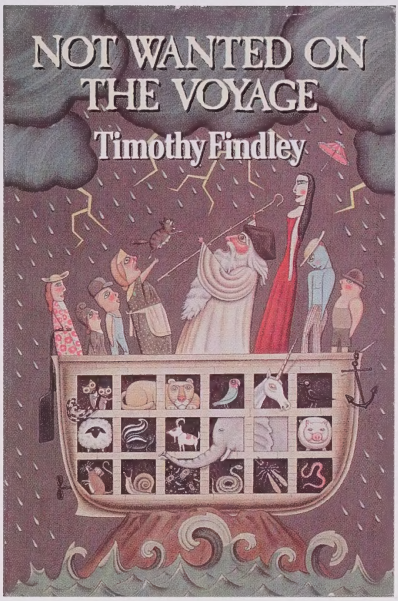
> [t]he most explicit distinguishing feature between the North American Indian languages and the European languages is that in Indian (e.g., Cree, Ojibway), there is no gender. In Cree, Ojibway, etc., unlike English, French, German, etc., the male-female-neuter hierarchy is entirely absent. So that by this system of thought, the central hero figure [the trickster] from our mythology—theology, if you will—is theoretically neither exclusively male nor exclusively female, or is both simultaneously.[37]

Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that one of the central concerns of many of the works in this exhibition is the critique and exploration of gender and its (complicated) connection with sexuality. As noted above, it is rare to see literary histories that examine the works of lesbians and gay men together; even most anthologies are gender-specific. However, in *Gay & Lesbian Poetry in Our Time* (1988), primarily an American anthology (but one that includes poems by Beth Brant, C.M. Donald, and Daryl Hine—all represented in this exhibit), Carl Morse argues, in the introductory conversation with co-editor Joan Larkin, that 'there's *always* been a lot of underground speaking going on between lesbians and gay men,' and that writers such as Djuna Barnes, H.D., Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf 'have had a very deep effect on many gay men.'[38] Jane Rule, particularly in her later fiction, felt it necessary to write about both gay men and lesbians, queer and straight people, because that reflected the world she lived in. While it is necessary to examine the different ways gays and lesbians experience sexuality, community, oppression, and myriad other things (and there is no *universal* lesbian or gay experience), we also believe there is much to be gained by looking at their works together. Moreover, this conventional binary division is simplistic in the sense that it cannot account for other queer writers or works that explore bisexual, transgender, and two-spirit realities. Many works in this exhibition feature characters who fail to conform to expected gender roles and instead exist in more liminal and marginal spaces. For example, Arjie in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994) plays the role of bride in a childhood game with the girls in his extended family in Sri Lanka:

> [B]y the sari being wrapped around my body, the veil being pinned to my head, the rouge put on my cheeks, lipstick on my lips, kohl around my eyes [...] I was able to leave the constraints of myself and ascend into another, more brilliant, more beautiful self, [...] around whom the world, represented by my cousins putting flowers in my hair, draping the palu, seemed to resolve. It was a self magnified, like the goddesses of the Sinhalese and Tamil cinema, larger than life; and like them, [...] I was an icon, a graceful, benevolent, perfect being upon whom the adoring eyes of the world rested.[39]

In a country of ethnic cleavage between Sinhalese and Tamil, and where gender lines are strictly enforced, Arjie's act of imagination and creativity—the place of fiction—allows him to experience a wholeness he is otherwise denied. He is wrenched from this realm, however, when his western-educated cousin calls him 'pansy,' 'faggot,' and 'sissy'[40]—words he has never heard before. Arjie's favourite books are the *Little Women* novels by Louisa May Alcott, identifying as he does far more with the plight of Jo (a tomboy, interestingly) than with the British schoolboys about whom he must recite the poem 'The Best School of All' by Sir Henry Newbolt.


A boy's bittersweet passage to maturity is hauntingly set against growing political tensions in Sri Lanka
funny boy
A novel in six stories
SHYAM SELVADURAI



Shani Mootoo, writing of an imaginary (and liminal) place in the Caribbean in her novel *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996), depicts the budding relationship between the effeminate male Nurse Tyler and Otoh, who has magically transformed himself from male to female (a reference to Woolf's *Orlando*, to be sure). The novel is utopian in the ways it imagines border and gender crossings as a means of escaping or overcoming a (sexually) violent colonial legacy. In Camilla Gibb's 'On All Fours in Brooklyn' (from Carellin Brooks and Brett Josef Grubisic's anthology *Carnal Nation: Brave New Sex Fictions*, 2000) the now adult Penny, who imagined herself to be Russian royalty, but instead was called 'Princess Commie Big Shit Lezzie,' recounts her adolescent infatuation with 'Trudy, who called herself Rudy because she was a girl who believed she was a boy.'[41] Lucy (a.k.a. Lucifer) in Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984) is one of many subversive reimaginings of the Genesis story of Noah and the flood that serves to critique heteropatriarchal power and its master narratives. It seems that with these works, and a number of dramatic ones addressed below, any literary history that was based purely on gender would fail to take into account the richness of these texts and the way they blur established categories. Moreover, recent queer theorizations of Mrs. Bentley in Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* (1941) have finally moved us away from a traditional Canadian literary focus on place (and here, on 'prairie realism') and reductive analyses of the 'unreliable narrator' to suggest something far more complex and valuable about Ross and his work:

> [T]he first-person narration of *As For Me and My House*, the locutionary positioning of Mrs. Bentley as enigmatic diarist, constitutes a twentieth-century Canadian example of 'narrative transvestism,' and [...] 'the dialectic of display and concealment' exhibited by the text opens up a cross-gender space of liminal minority gay identification.[42]

Que(e)rying Borders

If this exhibition forces us to rethink literary histories that make simple distinctions between gay and lesbian material, it challenges other identity categories as well. One of the difficulties of talking about a national literature is deciding whom to include and why. We have omitted some writers and included others, sometimes following other critics' rationales and at times following our own. To suggest that there is a discrete and self-contained queer Canadian tradition would be a mistake. Beyond the fact that some of the writers included here were not born or do not live in Canada (though, by and large, we have chosen those who at least have produced work here, or who write about Canada[43]), queerness itself presents a challenge to easy national distinctions. In terms of a tradition, how can one ignore the larger dialogue with, or homage to, writers such as Sappho, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf, Radclyffe Hall, André Gide, Tennessee Williams, James Baldwin, the Beats, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, or the post-Stonewall Violet Quill group in New York, to list just a few? To be sure, many of our featured writers, Canadian-born or not, would probably first have read queer texts by writers of other nationalities. There are parallels here with Dionne Brand's comments on her literary influences:

> What some white reviewers lack is a sense of what literature that is made by Black people and other people of colour is about. If you read my work, you have to read Toni Morrison, you have to read Derek Walcott, Rosa Guy, Jean Rhys, Paule Marshall, Michael Anthony, Eddie Brathwaite, and African writers and poets [...]. I don't consider myself on any margin, on the margin of Canadian literature. I'm sitting right in the middle of Black literature, because that's who I read, that's who I respond to.[44]

Recognizing the ways in which national belonging means something quite different to diasporic and First Nations writers, we have included two texts in particular that challenge national borders (and their troubling colonial histories): *Má-ka: Diasporic Juks: Contemporary Writing by Queers of African Descent* (ed. Debbie Douglas, Courtnay McFarlane, Makeda Silvera, and Douglas Stewart, 1997) and *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women* (ed. Beth Brant, 1984; 3rd ed. 1988). In addition, many of the anthologies we feature contain works by non-Canadians and some authors whose nationality is unclear (in certain cases full biographical information has not been provided). What we have, then, is something that is more suggestive of a 'Queer Nation,' one that upsets easy borders and checkpoints, and instead calls into question the very process and resulting power relations (re)produced through such classificatory regimes in the first place.

Pioneers: Pre-1975 Material (Cases 1–2)

To speak of 'pioneers' feels, on the one hand, rather Canadian (with all of its colonial implications), and on the other, as though one is following a certain ideological narrative that is at work in many literary histories. According to Hutcheon (quoting David Perkins),

> [t]he potent combination of the nostalgic impact of origins (the founding moment) and linear utopian projection (into the future) that informs this model [of literary history] is one clear reason for its consis-

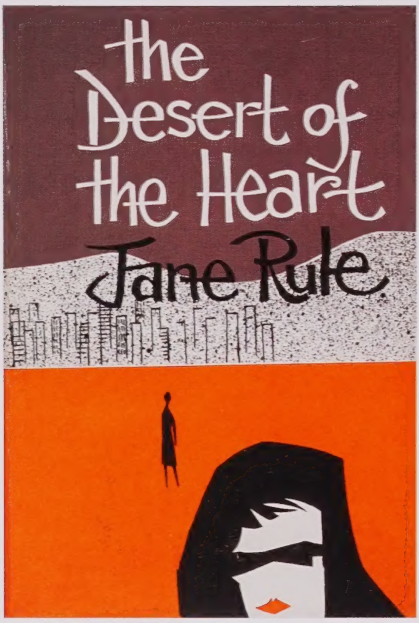
> tent appeal to any group that has felt oppressed by dominant powers on the level of nation but also of gender, sexual choice, class, race, ethnicity, language, or religion. Like nations, all marginalized groups 'turn to the past in search of identity, tradition, and self-understanding. Their histories do not usually stress discontinuity but the opposite.' In fact, literary histories not only create continuities, but, in the process, confer legitimacy. That was the intent of the nationalist founders of the form in the past, and it is one of the aims of the interventionist practitioners today.[45]

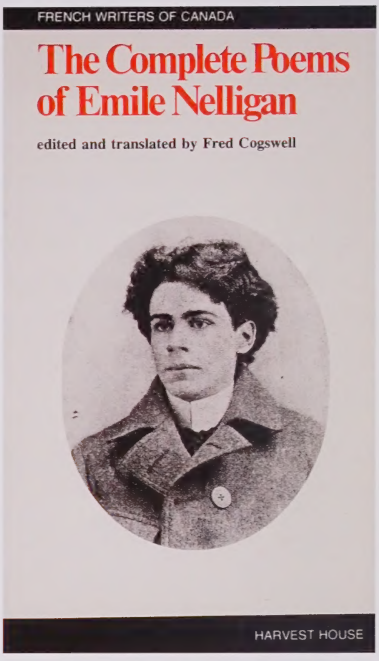
Indeed, it is precisely such a narrative that allows queer history to be written, legitimized, and accepted as a truthful record. But this can also lead to a generational divide that marginalizes a younger generation who are accused of failing to 'know their history' or appreciating the struggle of those who went before. There are also newcomers who deliberately set out to overthrow those earlier writers, which is what we see in the introduction to *The Penguin Book of Gay Short Stories* (ed. David Leavitt and Mark Mitchell, 1994), in which Leavitt takes aim at the Violet Quill group of New York writers of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Andrew Holleran and Robert Ferro. Surely a queer literary tradition must interrogate and be suspicious of this rather Oedipal and (hetero)sexist model of literary history.[46] Nevertheless, to suggest that the 'pioneers' in our collection are the origin of what we will see later in the exhibit is misleading and problematic, particularly since there is a real lack of diversity in this first section. Many of the writers included in other parts of the exhibit would name Makeda Silvera as an influence, and obviously a 'pioneer,' before they would name Frank Oliver Call or even Scott Symons. As a writer, co-founder and managing editor of Sister Vision: Black Women and Women of Colour Press, and as an editor and co-editor of a number of anthologies (two of which are included here), as well as the feminist journal *Fireweed* for a time, Silvera has been instrumental in allowing talented, new, and otherwise silenced voices to be heard.

Aware of the implications of presenting a chronological layout—one that suggests progress, evolution, and influence—we have made a compromise and divided the works between pre- and post-1975, but then arranged them alphabetically, with the pre-1975 material appearing all together in the 'Pioneers' section, while the post-1975 material is separated into poetry, fiction, and drama. This approach still allows us to highlight particular works that are significant because of the time in which they appeared, and those early writers who have been important in creating (a) queer Canadian literature.

For her activism, her body of fictional and non-fictional work, her outspokenness, and her mentorship of other writers, Jane Rule was matchless, and we have also dedicated this exhibition to her. *The Desert of the Heart* (1964; made into the film *Desert Hearts* by Donna Deitch in 1985), which was finally published by Macmillan of Canada after numerous rejections by American publishers, put her (and hence queer lives) in the public eye in an unprecedented way. Rule is an interesting case of an early writer who moved to, rather than from, Canada (as we see with Patrick Anderson, Elsa Gidlow, Daryl Hine, or Edward Lacey, for example). Her settlement on the West Coast perhaps tells us more about certain liberal cultural centres throughout North America than a simple Canada-U.S. divide.

If Rule is an obvious choice, some of the others in this section are perhaps





less so. Joan Haggerty's *Daughters of the Moon* (1971) examines a sexual relationship between two pregnant women, one who has left her husband in London, the other having left Paris after the suicide of her male lover. The relationship ends in tragedy as the first woman returns to her husband, abandoning the other, who then dies in childbirth. Although this may sound like an old story of queer love as tragedy, here the female lover she has left haunts Haggerty's 'survivor,' and the author provides us with an analysis of how and why a woman would deny lesbian desire in favour of returning to a patriarchal realm.[47]

Frank Oliver Call's *Acanthus and Wild Grape* (1920) is often said to be the first book of gay poetry in Canada,[48] though here we have included his later *Sonnets for Youth* (1944), featuring the poem 'White Hyacinth.' Hyacinth (or Hyacinthus) has always been a standard figure in homoerotic poetry, since the Greek myth tells of how the young prince of Sparta was accidentally killed by his lover Apollo. While the god was teaching the youth to throw a discus, the jealous god of the west wind, Zephyr, redirected it at Hyacinth's head. At the place where his blood spilled on the ground, there immediately sprouted the flower that now bears his name.

Born in Montreal a year after Call, in 1879, to an Irish father and a Québécois mother, the poet Émile Nelligan had a brief but significant literary career before being admitted to an asylum, which is 'widely taken to indicate his homosexuality [....He] can still function as an icon of the gay man in Quebec, destroyed by his culture and its assimilation into English.'[49] Here we feature *The Complete Poems of Émile Nelligan* (1983; trans. Fred Cogswell).

Robert Finch, a professor (University of Toronto) like Call (who taught at Bishop's University in Lennoxville), won the Governor General's Award for poetry in both 1946 and 1961. We have included his first award-winning book, *Poems*, in part because of the controversy that ensued from statements made by John Sutherland in his review of the collection. Sutherland called Finch a

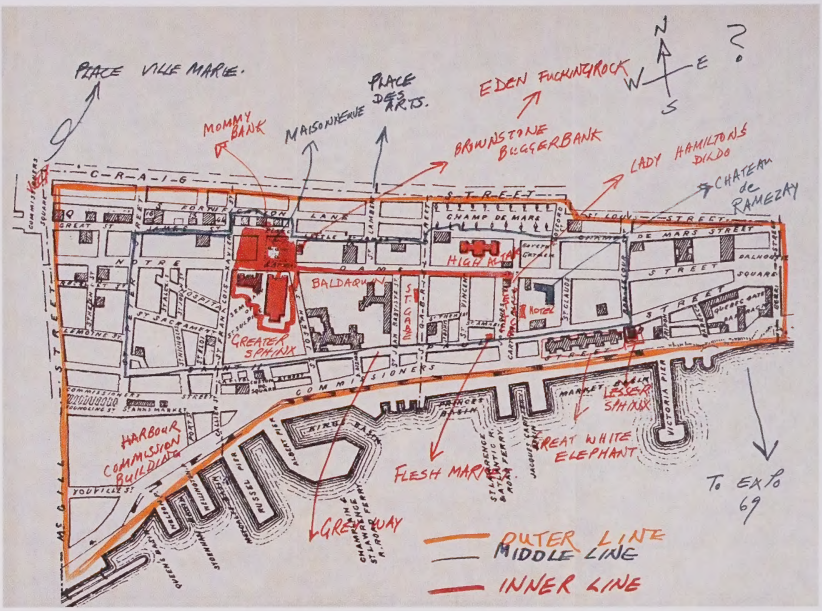
'dandified versifier,' which led, as some critics argue, to his marginalization as a figure in Canadian poetry.[50] And while Finch, who died in 1995, was not known to be 'out'—and his poems are not particularly explicit about same-sex desire—the debate over the kind of masculinist poetry that would come to be valued in Canadian literature does seem important to the argument we are making here about how one literary tradition functions at the expense of others and necessarily excludes voices such as Finch's. As John Barton adeptly summarizes, 'When considering the straight male poets [referring to Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, and Raymond Souster] who have held sway in Canada for the last sixty years and while acknowledging the growing diversity of their aesthetics, it is striking how much of a boys' club Canadian poetry has remained (just ask the girls).'[51]

The better-known casualty in these debates is Patrick Anderson, the British-born but later naturalized Canadian, who also took critical blows from John Sutherland a few years earlier, in 1943. In *First Statement*, the rival modernist literary publication to Anderson's *Preview*, Sutherland suggested in his critique of the poem 'Montreal' that the boy who has 'some sexual experience of a kind not quite normal' must be Anderson himself.[52] As Barton makes clear, '[w]e can only imagine the impact such a review would have had on any poet. Anderson was then married and taught school-age boys during a time when homosexual crimes were punished with prison sentences.'[53] Still, can anyone read a poem such as 'Drinker,' first published in *Preview* in May 1942 and included in the display, about a man at a drinking fountain, whose 'act seems private, /...his massive working throat is a column of pure love'[54], and miss the allusion? With Alistair Sutherland, Anderson would later edit *Eros: An Anthology of Male Friendship* (1961), a collection that we have not included here since it lacks Canadian content, but which has nonetheless been significant in the development of a gay literary tradition (despite the fact that the editors never actually mention homosexuality).

We have also included a number of other works and writers that have been the subject of controversy, and hence furthered the public discussion of sexual diversity. Although Robert K. Martin ultimately concludes about *Beautiful Losers* (1966) that '[h]omosexuality is celebrated in Cohen, but only as a way of reinforcing heterosexuality,'[55] the explicitness of the novel (about same-sex desire in particular) clearly made way for others to approach the subject. As many recall, 'Robert Fulford called the [novel] "the most revolting book ever written in Canada," but also "the most interesting Canadian book of the year."'[56] In a letter to Cohen the year before, Jack McClelland wrote,

> Migod, it's a fantastic book. It astounds me and baffles me and I don't really know what to say about it. It's wild and incredible and marvelously well written, and at the same time appalling, shocking, revolting, disgusting, sick and just maybe it's a great novel. I'm damned if I know. I have no way of knowing [...]. You are a nice chap, Leonard, and it's lovely knowing you. All I have to decide now is whether I love you enough to want to spend the rest of my days in jail because of you.[57]

His 'love' for Cohen does seem to have won the day, however, and the book became a *succès de scandale*. Not that it necessarily helped Scott Symons a year later, when his much 'gayer' novel *Combat Journal for Place d'Armes: A Personal*



The cruising map of Montreal from *Place d'Armes*, by Scott Symons.

Narrative appeared (also published by McClelland and Stewart). Peter Dickinson argues that Fulford's attack had as much to do with the fervent nationalism surrounding Canada's centenary celebrations and Expo 67 as it did with the novel's explicit sexuality.[58] Critics such as Robert K. Martin argue that *Place d'Armes* helped to usher in the postmodern novel in Canada, but is nonetheless a troubling text for the way it depicts not just gays (it is no flag-waving gay liberation novel), but the Québécois, women, and people of colour.[59]

One last controversy, much less well known, is the case of *ONE Magazine* and 'Brother Grundy' (the pseudonym of Thomas L. Waugh, who lived in Toronto and in the early 1950s attended Emmanuel College, University of Toronto).[60] Here we feature Grundy's poem 'Lord Samuel and Lord Montagu,' concerning the sensational trial in Britain of Baron Montagu of Beaulieu, who was convicted and imprisoned in 1954 for 'conspiracy to incite certain male persons to commit serious offences with male persons' (a charge also made against Oscar Wilde). The poem was published in the October 1954 issue of the American magazine, and was one of the items thought to be 'obscene' by the Los Angeles postmaster, Otto K. Oleson, who then refused to allow the issue to be mailed. This precipitated an important legal case for gay publishing that went all the way to the United States Supreme Court, which ruled in 1958 that the material was not obscene and should be protected as an exercise of free speech. We've also included the less controversial, but no less delightful and witty, 'I Thought I Saw ...'.

From a 1964 issue of the pioneering gay magazine *TWO: The Homosexual Viewpoint in Canada* we have included the poem 'The Upper Room' about the Music Room, one of Toronto's first gay clubs, by 'Peter Alann'—pseudonym for John Alan Lee, professor emeritus of sociology at University of Toronto Scarborough, and author of *The Colors of Love* (1973 and 1976), *Getting Sex* (1978), and, more recently, the autobiography *Love's Gay Fool* (2003).

As previously discussed, Sinclair Ross's novel *As For Me and My House* (1941) is clearly a Canadian classic, but is also fascinating because of its exploration of gender and (repressed) sexuality, and the way Ross has managed to create one of the most enigmatic and important female voices in Canadian literature.

Poet Edward Lacey was born in Lindsay, Ontario, attended University College, University of Toronto, and lived and taught all over the world, most notably in Mexico, in order to avoid having to remain in what he viewed as a repressed and moralistic culture. It was Margaret Atwood and Dennis Lee (Lacey met the latter, as well as Robert Finch, at University of Toronto) who helped get his 1965 *The Forms of Loss* published; this is now considered to be the first openly gay book of poetry in Canada.[61]

That same year saw the publication of Phyllis Webb's *Naked Poems*. A CCF candidate for the BC provincial legislature, a teacher at University of British Columbia, and the person who conceived of the CBC radio program *Ideas*, Webb also won the Governor General's Award for *The Vision Tree: Selected Poems* in 1982.[62] Although some have called her lesbian works 'coded,' the reference '*On the floor your blouse*' in the minimalist poem 'Suite II' makes it clear the 'you' is a woman, though Webb still finds identity labels limiting.

Also an interesting inclusion, and one that blurs certain categories, is Brion Gysin, who 'used to refer to himself as the man from nowhere.'[63] He was born at a Canadian military hospital in England to a Canadian mother, and after his father was reported missing in action Gysin came here and spent a number of years in and around Edmonton before leaving again for schooling in England. During the Second World War, however, Gysin transferred from the American paratroopers to the Canadian army, and while stationed on the home front wrote *To Master–A Long Goodnight: The Story of Uncle Tom: A Historical Narrative* (1946), about Josiah Henson, the real-life model for Uncle Tom (from Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*). The text includes an appendix, 'The History of Slavery in Canada.' Gysin is known more for his visual art, such as the paintings and cut-up work he did on his own and then collaboratively with William S. Burroughs. Although Gysin worked in various media (and made a number of sound recordings, some with Burroughs), and his connection to Canada is tenuous (he lived most of his life in places such as Tangier and Paris), Barton and Nickerson include him in *Seminal*, and we have followed suit.

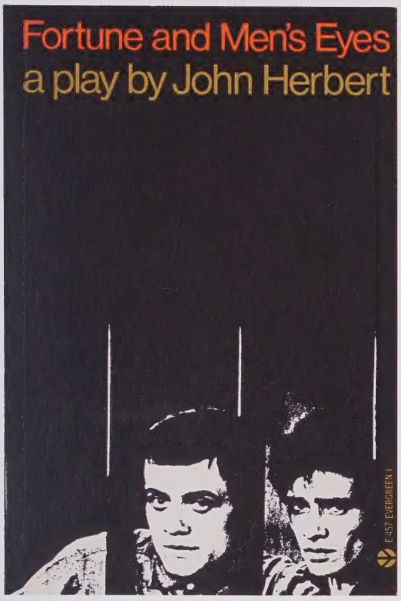
Another name that some might question here is John Glassco. Born in Montreal, Glassco is most famous for *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (1970), detailing his three-year stay in Paris that began in 1928 and included meetings with various figures associated with the 'Lost Generation,' such as Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein, along with Lord Alfred Douglas (known as Bosie, Oscar Wilde's lover and the son of the Marquess of Queensberry who helped precipitate Wilde's legal trouble and eventual imprisonment). There has been debate about when Glassco actually wrote the text (immediately after his return, or later, in the 1960s), and about how much the memoir should be considered a *fictional* account of his life during this period. Although Glassco is now considered to be gay or bisexual, the memoir is never explicit, particularly, in Andrew Lesk's words, about 'Robert McAlmon (his erstwhile lover).'[64] Glassco is also known for his poetry (winning the Governor General's Award for *Selected Poems* in 1971), his French translations, and for the pornographic works he published under a pseudonym. While it may offend some to think of Glassco

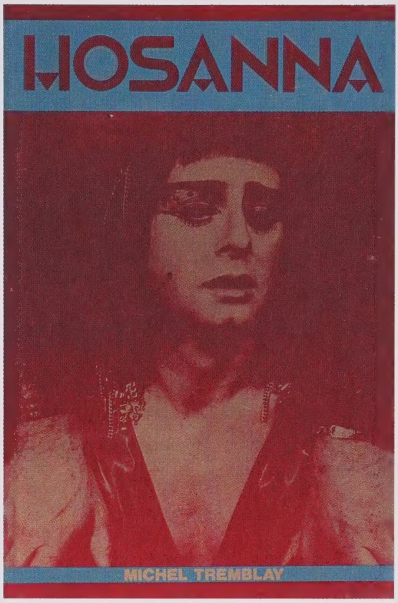
as a pioneer, since he remained coy about his sexuality, he and his memoir have nonetheless become associated with a Canadian gay or queer literary history, which, we must keep in mind, is never simply about the stories we want to hear or the ones that confirm the identities and beliefs we now value. Robert K. Martin looks at the matter purely textually in terms of the camp aesthetic that marks Glassco's style in the memoir. Lesk suggests that, although it was published (and probably written) 'at a time when socially conservative views of libidinal bondings seemed to be breaking down in Canada,' the homophobic reaction to the books of Cohen and Symons, amid the fervent nationalism of the day, may have led Glassco to retreat into the kinds of elisions we encounter in the memoir.[65] Lesk argues that Glassco's desire not to be excluded from 'the canon of Canadian letters'[66] meant more to him than open expression, thus reminding us again of how the very idea of a 'centre' in Canadian literature is dependent on exclusion and elision.

At the other end of the spectrum is Ian Young, who has remained uncompromising in activist and literary work. Born in England, Young moved to Toronto in the 1950s and attended University of Toronto, where he co-founded in 1969 Canada's first gay university group, the University of Toronto Homophile Association. In 1970 he established Catalyst, Canada's first gay literary press. Also notable on the literary front was Young's 1973 poetry collection *The Male Muse: A Gay Anthology*. This text (which was published in the United States because no Canadian publisher would take it) was influential in bringing together a number of writers who had a profound impact on the next generation of writers (and includes some Canadian content with the work of Young, bill bissett, Graham Jackson, Edward Lacey, and others). In a piece on Young, which includes an interview with him, Andy Quan (whose short fiction appears in *Carnal Nation*, *Contra/diction*, and *Queeries*, and whose poetry is included in *Seminal*) calls Young a pioneer, and recounts how this anthology was the first gay book he was able to hunt down in the library.[67] Young's book of verse *Year of the Quiet Sun* was published by Anansi in 1969, and his 1975 bibliography *The Male Homosexual in Literature* was also groundbreaking.

Another important figure in Canadian poetry, and one whose own publishing house (blewointmentpress, founded 1966) was influential to the careers of many poets, is bill bissett. A visual artist, sound poet, and author of over sixty books of poetry, bissett has defied convention in both his life and work. In 1977 a Conservative MP attacked the Canada Council for supporting the poet's 'pornographic work.'[68] Indeed, it was the council's funding cut to blewointment that led bissett to sell it in the mid-1980s. Known for his 'refusal to accept the normal constraints of gender'[69] (and sexuality), bissett has also resisted convention as a poet; his non-traditional orthography gives his work its unique character and produces a kind of counter-discourse, in which language works against itself to become new and fresh again.

> One of his finest sequences is *Pomes for Yoshi* [sic] [included here, 1972; rpt. 1977], in which a series of love lyrics is juxtaposed to an increasingly weird and nightmarish story of bisset's [sic] troubles in the house he lives in; yet the long closing narrative, one of his most devastating accounts of the 'straight' world, ends with the humanistic assertion that 'its / beautiful / to feel so many / peopul around me.'[70]





Daryl Hine, born in British Columbia and educated at McGill, has been living in the U.S. since 1967. Hine taught classics for many years at the University of Chicago, University of Illinois, and Northwestern, and his 1975 *Resident Alien* examines his status as an outsider in the country. Praised by Northrop Frye while he was at McGill, Hine achieved a certain recognition early on, but it was only in 1975, with his autobiographical verse text *In and Out*, that he dealt openly with his sexuality, including his relationships at McGill and his struggle with religion. Years earlier, in the poem 'The Destruction of Sodom' (*The Devil's Picture Book*, 1961), the speaker announces he is a 'pervert of the imagination.'[71] According to Robert K. Martin, however, the homosexuality here, or in poems such as 'Patroclus Putting on the Armour of Achilles' (from *The Wooden Horse*, 1965), is 'discreet' and 'literary.'[72]

Two important pioneers in theatre are John Herbert (pseudonym of John Brundage) and Michel Tremblay; however, one could also claim that it has been the efforts of Sky Gilbert, and especially his co-founding (in 1979) and artistic directorship of Toronto's Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, that have been fundamental for the production of queer work in Canada. Herbert's work appears in its own case (Case 13, Maclean-Hunter Reading Room), where we have also included his Underwood typewriter and a photograph of the author. Herbert's play *Fortune and Men's Eyes* (1967) came out of his own experience in the prison system. He was convicted in 1946 of gross indecency at age twenty, after a group of young men attacked him and then accused him of making sexual advances. Although produced on Broadway in 1967 and turned into an important film in 1971, the play was not professionally produced on stage in Canada until 1975. *Fortune and Men's Eyes* is a scathing indictment not only of the penal system but of the violence and sexual politics endemic to the culture of the day. Most theatrical about the play is the figure of Queenie, 'a flamboyant homosexual with a switchblade wit.'[73]

No less bitchy and over the top is Michel Tremblay's iconic Hosanna of his play of the same name, which has incited critical debate about its nationalist politics since its Quebec premiere in 1973 (English, 1974). Is the drag queen Hosanna an in-your-face public declaration of sexual diversity, or, as a failed man and woman, an allegory of Quebec's status? Tremblay's own views on a sovereign Quebec are well known, and the playwright himself has stirred the pot by encouraging political readings of the play. This has suited mainstream critics just fine.[74] Tremblay, however, has been quite open about his sexuality, and in his novels, plays, and writings for television he has remained steadfast in his social critique of gender, class, sexuality, and English-French relations in Canada.

Poetry (Cases 3–4)

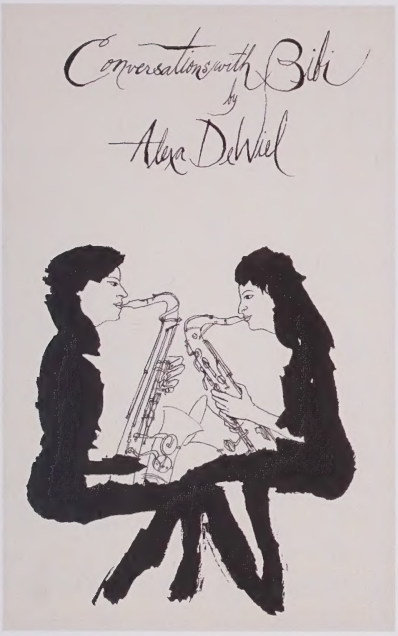
Dionne Brand has said in an interview,

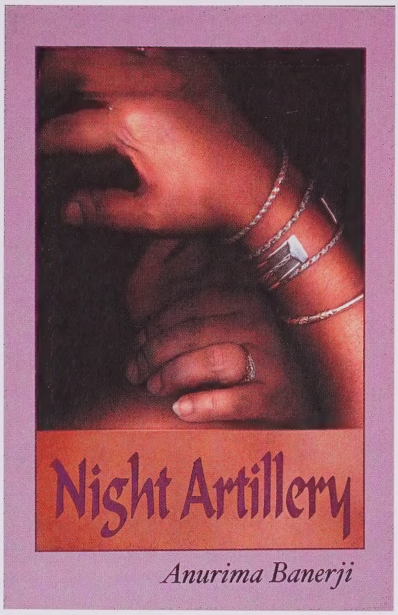
> I have to have poetry going on to feel a certain sanity. The shape and order of poetry, its ability to contain universes of ideas which can lift you out of the immediate dread of living—and I don't mean lift by deceit or fantasy but by clarity, a kind of sense-making which doesn't spare you the dread but offers you this clarity which is like being able to feel air or night, to feel the intangible.[75]

One is reminded here of Audre Lorde, who, in her essay 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury,' argues that '[p]oetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.'[76] And it is the power of naming lesbian experience—bringing it into existence with words—that Brand explores so powerfully in *No Language Is Neutral* (1990), where the tongue is eroticized and politicized, as a site of pleasure and power.

In Erin Mouré's poem 'Aspen,' from *Furious* (1988), the first collection of lesbian poems to win the Governor General's Award, the poet writes of 'Woman whose arms are the bones of the poem, / full of indispensible marrow // [...] I touch her with my mouth.'[77] Poetry becomes a new way to imagine a different kind of sexual experience. Just as Dionne Brand speaks of being explicit about her sexuality in *No Language Is Neutral* (because she was waiting 'until I could do it really well [...]. I had to wait until I had the words to do it with'[78]) Mouré asserts that '[t]he same old tired forms of writing about love aren't good enough for me. I don't think that love between women or lesbian love should be written in the same tired way.'[79] As Nathalie Stephens writes, 'Where is the poet who will return language to the body? // Where is the body that is prepared to receive language?'[80] Sexuality and young male beauty are the focus of Jean-Paul Daoust's *Black Diva: Selected Poems, 1982–1986* (1991; trans. Daniel Sloate). Poetry has consistently been the site for exploring the body. C.M. Donald's *The Fat Woman Measures Up* (1986), for example, examines body image, identity, and sexual desire. For Gregory Woods,

> poetry (which so many people dismiss as incredible, unreadable and unreal, suitable only to eggheads and sissies) is the ideal medium for a creativity that liberates. Within the miracle of its release from the restrictions of prose, verse allows for a world in which not all rules apply—not even the so called 'laws' of nature. [...] In order to understand the role of gay poetry on the battlefield of hetero-homo





> confrontation, we need to discard the typically English association of poetry with the gentility, serenity and sensitivity of tea-time in a vicarage garden. On the contrary, poetry is the most violent of the written arts: consistently cruel to language, vicious with logic, swift to the jugular of politics.[81]

Robin Blaser's *The Holy Forest* (2006) is both a long poem and a collection of poetry that covers five decades. At once political and theoretical, the text maps the life of this poet and academic. Alexa DeWiel, in *Conversations with Bibi* (1975), which looks at how heterosexual marriage has failed a number of women, sets her examination of relationships and love in a global context. The poems here are concerned with the personal and the local, as well as the larger political and economic realities of the world in the 1970s.

Established poets such as Dorothy Livesay and Douglas LePan, known for the majority of their careers as heterosexual poets, but who experienced same-sex relationships late in life, have used the medium of poetry to tell of that awakening. Livesay had earlier shocked readers with her explicit exploration of sexuality and sexual politics (including an account of an affair she had with a younger man) in *The Unquiet Bed* (1967), which she wrote in her late fifties. In *Feeling the Worlds: New Poems* (1984), which deals, in part, with female sexuality and the aging body, she describes a same-sex experience as a new beginning in 'Towards a Love Poem':

> Because you elected to know me
> after reading my poems
> because you elected to love me
> in spite of my years
> I can withstand

the eyebrows lifted
the whispers of critics:
'She is so strange...'

O early morning listener
lover explorer
who places the affirming kiss
on my vulva
catch as catch can
love in flight weightless

I too
am learning to fly
under water[82]

Douglas LePan was a poet, novelist (winning Governor General's Awards in both categories), a professor of English at Queen's University, principal of University College, University of Toronto, and senior fellow of Massey College. All this after having served in the Second World War and then in the diplomatic corps and Canada's Department of External Affairs. In *Far Voyages* (1990), the poet recounts his love affair with a younger man who died of cancer in 1985:

Finding you
was like finding a diamond in the grass,
[...]
a lost love lyric
[...]
[...] those comparisons for finding you
could go on and on...

But for losing you?...
there's no comparison for that, not one.[83]

Poetry has always been the place to explore love and loss, as we see in Anurima Banerji's account of exile in *Night Artillery* (2000), which uses Hindu mythology to give voice to the body's desire and pain. Poetry also takes on new meanings and purposes in the age of AIDS. The poems of Blaine Marchand, Ian Stephens (both included in *Seminal*), Michael Estok (*A Plague Year Journal*, 1989), Michael Lynch (*These Waves of Dying Friends*, 1989), and Ian Iqbal Rashid (*Black Markets, White Boyfriends and Other Acts of Elision*, 1991) are uncompromising in their depiction of those affected in multiple ways by the epidemic. These are the poems of witness, of voicing one's presence in the face of such overwhelming absence and erasure, including their own in the case of Estok, Lynch, and Stephens, who wrote their works while dying. For Lynch, poetry is like the names of the dead inscribed on the gloved fingers worn by protestors after police wore similar gloves when arresting a group of AIDS activists. Unlike the homophobic actions of the police, representative of government indifference and disdain, the protestors here wear the rubber gloves as a way of keeping the dead close to them:

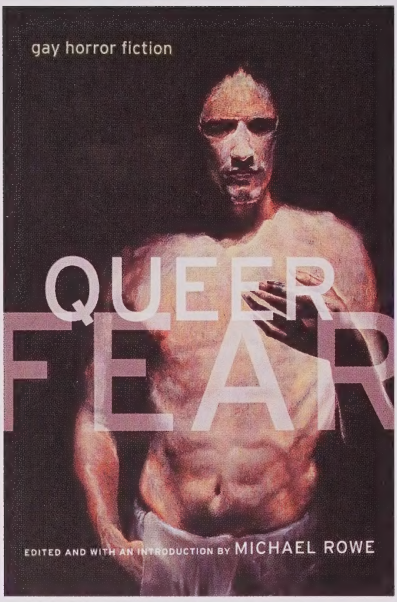
We want you all beside us on these steps,
this other dancefloor, gloved fists in the air
defying the empowered who deny

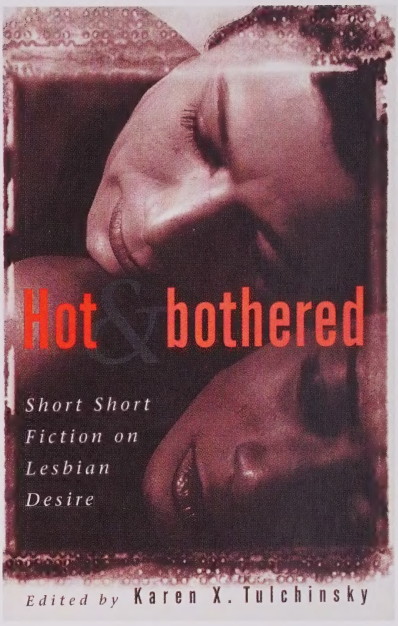
our lives and deaths, our fucking, and our hate.
We too can organize, and camp
inside whatever colonnade. We should have known
we're tough, our fist in the yellow kitchen glove
transformed by the outer fingers in the air.[84]

Fiction (Cases 5–8)

One of the problems with putting this display together has been, of course, narrowing things down to fit the limited exhibition space in Fisher. This led us to make some fairly radical decisions. For example, not being able to include all the authors we thought should be here, we felt that certain writers could at least be represented in the anthologies we chose to incorporate. We also decided (which will displease some, to be sure) to include only one text per author (though a handful of writers appear as editors as well). In the fiction section, then, one might expect to see novels such as Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (1996) or *What We All Long For* (2005) and Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic* (1988), or see in the drama section Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* (1988) or *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989) and Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet* (1990), since no one doubts that they are part of any queer 'tradition.' Writers such as Jim Bartley, Beth Brant, Nicole Brossard, Timothy Findley, Don Hannah, Jovette Marchessault, and Stan Persky have also produced significant works in more than one genre, and writers such as Marie-Claire Blais, Sky Gilbert, and R.M. Vaughan could easily have appeared in all three categories of drama, fiction, and poetry. This forced us in each case to choose the text we thought best represented that artist's unique articulation of queerness, while being careful not to create overlap with other works or writers. These were difficult decisions, but they enabled us to include more works by more writers, especially the less well known. We also decided to include quite a number of anthologies to give visitors a sense of the range and volume of what is available. The introductions to anthologies often speak of their value as a place where new voices can be heard alongside favourite and more established authors; these collections also signal the way in which publishers break new ground, both catering to and creating a particular market or niche (and/or community). Arsenal Pulp Press and Women's Press have been successful at producing a variety of works, from erotic writing (e.g., *Getting Wet*, ed. Carol Allain and Rosamund Elwin, 1992, and *Hot & Bothered*, ed. Karen X. Tulchinsky, 1998) to horror fiction (*Queer Fear*, ed. Michael Rowe, 2000) and sci-fi (*The Future Is Queer*, ed. Richard Labonté and Lawrence Schimel, 2006).

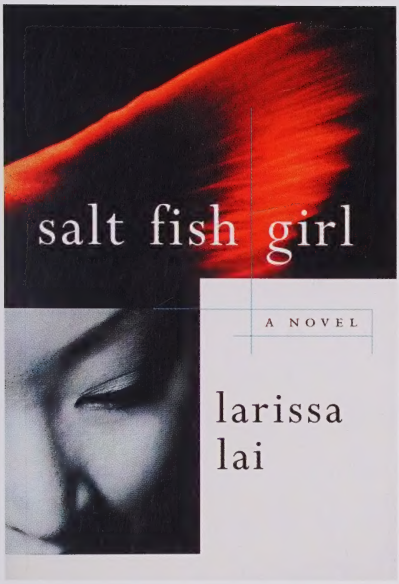
Another decision we made was to exclude non-fiction, since there seemed to be no limit to the number of qualified books in that category. Some of the most important critical and academic works have been mentioned throughout this essay, and many others are noteworthy (Jane Rule's *Lesbian Images*, 1975, for example, is a groundbreaking study). In addition, the literary non-fiction of writers such as Mariko Tamaki (*True Lies: The Book of Bad Advice*, 2002, and *Fake ID*, 2005), David Rakoff (*Fraud: Essays*, 2001), or even Elspeth Cameron (*No Previous Experience: A Memoir of Love and Change*, 1997, or *And Beauty Answers: The Life of Frances Loring and Florence Wyle*, 2007) deserve mention here. We have made two exceptions, however. One is Stan Persky's *Buddy's: Meditations on Desire* (1989), a key text that crosses genres in its use of poetic prose, theory,

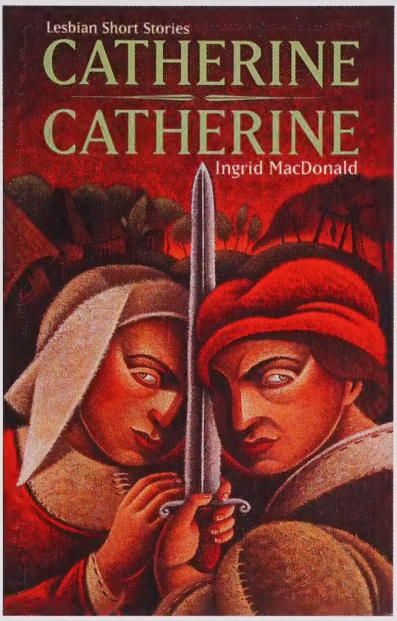




and something approaching 'fiction.' (Persky's work is also represented in a number of the anthologies here.) The other is Mary Meigs's *The Medusa Head* (1983), a fascinating account of her four-year relationship with Marie-Claire Blais and another woman, identified as 'Andrée,' while she lived in Brittany in the early 1970s. (When she met Blais, Meigs was with American author and civil rights activist Barbara Deming, and the three women had a six-year relationship during the 1960s.) Though born in the United States, Meigs (also a painter and illustrator) spent the rest of her life in Montreal. She had a part in the Cynthia Scott film *The Company of Strangers* (NFB, 1990), appearing as the lesbian character; she later wrote a book about the experience of making the film.

Given that many queer writers focus on sexuality in their work, the 'personal' will always be thought to play an important role in their fiction. Indeed, when queer writers write about sexuality, critics assume they are being autobiographical, in a way that heterosexual writers are not assumed to be. The coming-out story is a standard narrative in much gay and lesbian fiction, especially during the first wave of gay liberation works, and such narratives follow a script of sorts, invoking the common themes of personal journey and epiphany found in any coming-of-age story. However, the relationship between art and life is an intriguing one here, since many gays and lesbians think of their lives as either following or diverging from the standard plot of discovery and revelation—and sexual initiation—but always moving towards 'truth.' In this way, queer fiction plays a unique role in our lives, and any discussion of queer literature needs to take note of the fact that the fiction/non-fiction split is less clear than it is in the work of heterosexual writers. To draw on the personal in more explicit ways (as we see with Glassco, Meigs, or Persky) is therefore not unusual, but that experience is mediated through language and literary tropes and forms that pre-exist the author and with which he or she is always in dialogue, consciously or not. David Watmough, born in England, has examined the life of

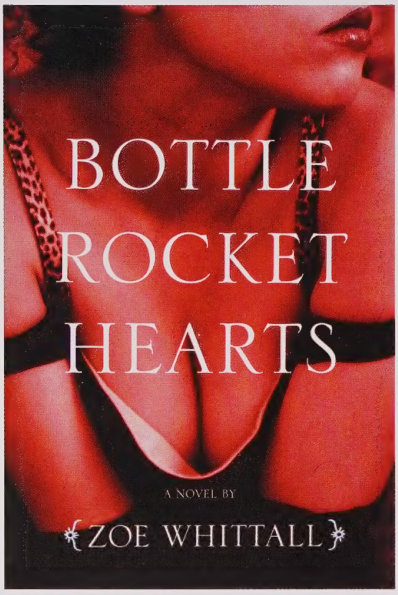


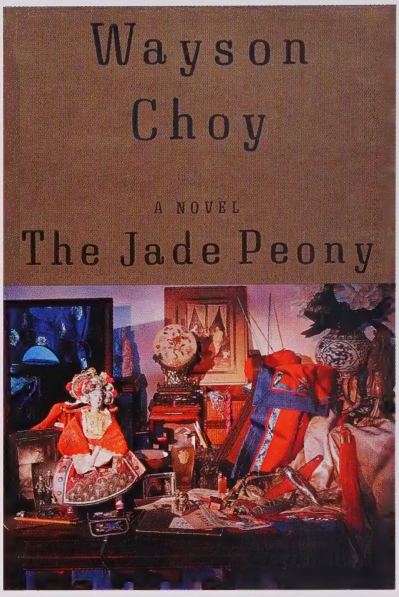


an immigrant and writer in Canada in novels such as *No More into the Garden: The Chronicles of Davey Bryant* (1978), one of about a dozen works that follow the life of Bryant, Watmough's fictional persona.

Another recurring feature of the works here is the way a number of writers examine the connection between sexuality and space—an issue particularly important in lesbian works, since it allows lesbian authors to talk about larger feminist concerns with what constitutes public and private space. Gail Scott's Lydia, in *Main Brides: Against Ochre Pediment and Aztec Sky* (1993), imagines the lives of a variety of women, including a lesbian couple, which she watches from a Montreal bar on 'the Main' in a city still haunted by the murder of fourteen women at the École Polytechnique on 6 December 1989. Marie-Claire Blais depicts lesbian bar life in a club called the Underground, in her novel *Nights in the Underground* (French, 1978; trans. Ray Ellenwood, 1979). This demimonde exists on the margins of society (well, below it at least) and allows Blais to explore liminality and the relationship between life and art. Anne Cameron plays with the idea of place in her 'Western,' *The Journey* (1982; rpt. 1986), in which two women, whose lives are as mythical as the wild west they inhabit, survive the hardships of the frontier in an attempt to escape patriarchal, homophobic law—embodied in one woman's husband, the sheriff—all the while taking comfort and healing from Chinese immigrant railway workers, prostitutes, and Aboriginal people.

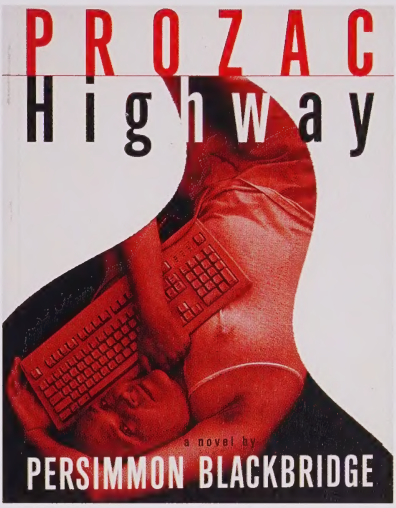
History and place are also central to Helen Humphreys's *The Lost Garden* (2002), set during the Blitz in London, where a woman negotiates relationships with both a man and a woman. Playing with figures from Chinese mythology, such as the shape-shifter, Larissa Lai in *Salt Fish Girl* (2002) sets the novel partly in nineteenth-century China and partly in an imagined, futuristic Pacific Northwest Canada. Lydia Kwa's *The Walking Boy* (2005), set in eighth-century China, follows a 'trans' monk on a journey where ghosts and myths are the stuff





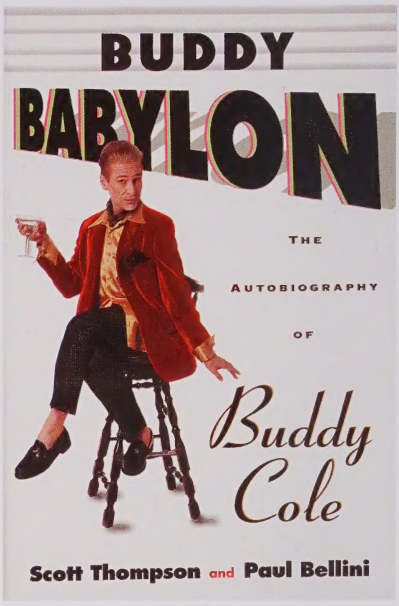
of everyday life. Ingrid MacDonald's *Catherine, Catherine* (1991) includes a trilogy of stories that considers the life of a cross-dressing (trans) eighteenth-century German woman who was executed for sodomy. Richard Teleky's protagonist in *Pack Up the Moon* (2001) tries to find out how a female friend of his was killed. The novel takes place in several times and places, including the gay liberation, women's rights, and anti-Vietnam movements of the 1960s. In *Bottle Rocket Hearts* (2007), Zoe Whittall brilliantly examines a love affair between two women (one a separatist) in Montreal in the months leading up to the 1995 Quebec referendum. In Marnie Woodrow's *Spelling Mississippi* (2002), the moody world of New Orleans—with its unique sounds, sights, and smells—is the backdrop for one woman's search for a lost lover. Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* (1996) beautifully evokes an early Cape Breton and the Harlem jazz world of New York City in a novel about hidden and violently suppressed desires between women and between whites and blacks. In *The Jade Peony* (1995), Wayson Choy looks at ethnic and racial tensions between Anglo- and Chinese Canadians, as well as the changing relationship of both groups and Japanese Canadians, in Vancouver at the onset of the Second World War. Nice Rodriguez's story collection *Throw It to the River* (1993) deals with a number of butch characters who carve out a space for themselves under challenging economic and political conditions in the Philippines and then as emigrants in Canada. Set in a variety of times and places, the stories in SKY Lee's *Bellydancer* (1994) examine exoticism, violence, and sexuality. In these texts, racism and homophobia are linked to sexism and the patriarchal order, and therefore queerness never entirely exists in some separate or private realm.

It is not surprising, then, that many of the works in this exhibit are unflinching in their examination of the painful and brutal stories of queer lives. In Eve Zaremba's detective novel *A Reason to Kill* (1978), her lesbian private investigator, Helen Keremos, discovers that homophobia is the motive for the murder of



a young gay man. Still other writers deal with aspects of sexuality that make many people uncomfortable. Sexual violence and abuse are common to many Canadian trauma narratives, and of course those issues are explored here, too. Writers such as Patrick Roscoe in *Birthmarks* (1990) and Todd Klinck in *Tacones (high heels)* (1997) examine street life, troubled youth, prostitution, and drug use. The murder and disposal of a shady hustler are the focus of Edward O. Phillips's first Geoffrey Chadwick novel, *Sunday's Child* (1981). Will Aitken's depiction of sexual blackmail and power in the relationship between a youth and an older man makes *Terre Haute* (1989) an original take on the coming-out novel. Mental illness is treated in nuanced and well-developed ways in Persimmon Blackbridge's *Prozac Highway* (1997), Annette Lapointe's *Stolen* (2006), and Darren Greer's *Still Life with June* (2003).

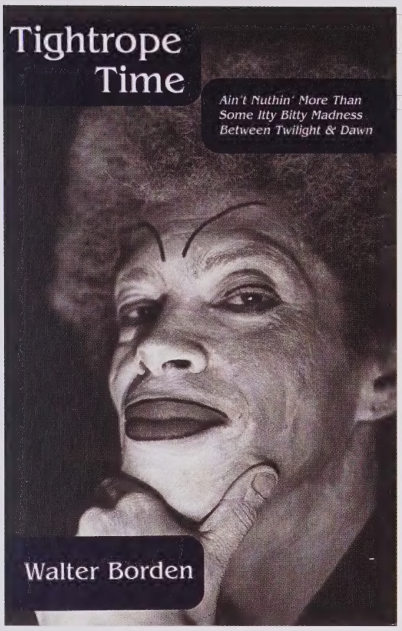
At the same time, to miss the comic nature of so much of the work in the exhibition would be an oversight, especially since irony, parody, satire, and camp have always been key queer strategies for questioning and subverting identity and 'normality.' It should therefore come as no surprise that the comic serves as a kind of survivalist discourse and a defamiliarizing technique in AIDS texts such as Peter McGehee's *Boys Like Us* (1991) or Gordon Armstrong's play, *Plague of the Gorgeous*, included in his 1996 anthology. The comic is also a key feature of stories such as Derek McCormack's *The Haunted Hillbilly* (2003), with its focus on a gay vampire in the milieu of types like Hank Williams. Bill Richardson's *Bachelor Brothers' Bed and Breakfast* (1993), which won the Stephen Leacock Award for Humour, is about two single twin brothers in their fifties who operate a B & B for bibliophiles on the west coast. Suzette Mayr's *Moon Honey* (1995) provides a witty and clever look at racism in a novel in which one white woman suddenly realizes she is black. Greg Kramer's *The Pursemonger of Fugu* (1995) is a campy 'bathroom mystery,' in which characters are named after Toronto intersections, such as Adelaide Simcoe and Beverley

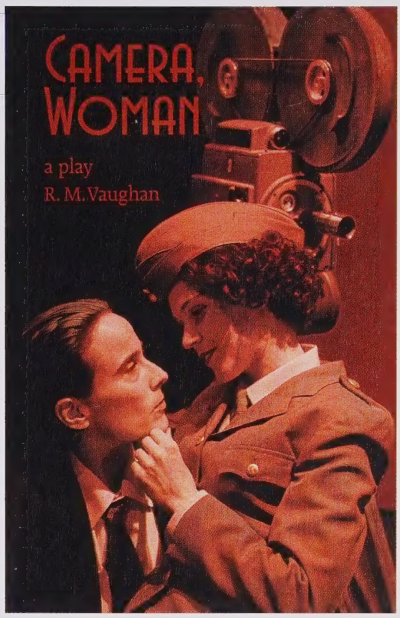


Dundas, and two gay lovers are named Nelson Duncan and Alexander Church. A work such as Scott Thompson and Paul Bellini's *Buddy Babylon: The Autobiography of Buddy Cole* (1998), which came out of a skit character Thompson performed for many years on *The Kids in the Hall* (CBC, 1988–94), is another work that crosses boundaries and blurs the line between 'high' and 'low' culture.

Drama (Cases 9–10)

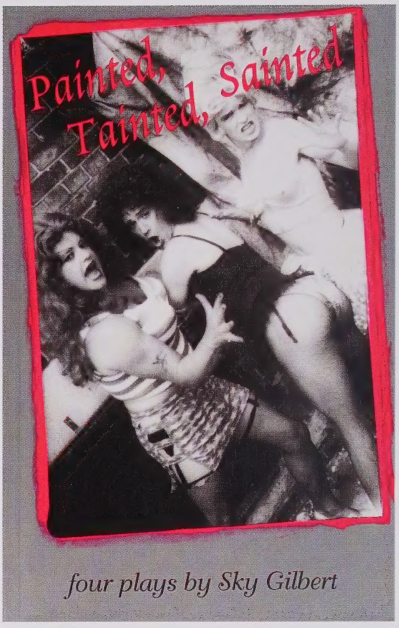
Not unexpectedly, comedy also takes centre stage in a number of the dramatic works included here, such as trey anthony's *'da Kink in My Hair* (2005), Walter Borden's *Tightrope Time: Ain't Nuthin' More Than Some Itty Bitty Madness Between Twilight & Dawn* (2005), and the plays of Sky Gilbert (included in *Painted, Tainted, Sainted: Four Plays*, 1996). And, of course, it is in theatrical work that gender and sexuality are often given the freest play, since it is the medium that foregrounds (and includes a long tradition of) role-playing, dressing up (and cross-dressing), and calling identity into question. All of this takes place within the context of a communal performance space, where an audience's reaction is a fundamental part of the theatre experience. As Alan Sinfield puts it, 'theatre and theatricality have been experienced throughout the twentieth century as queer' because '[t]heatre has been a particular site for the formation of dissident sexual identities.'[85] Queers, he argues, have always had a 'dramaturgical consciousness' because they are keenly aware of the daily acts of 'passing,' 'presenting a self,' and 'keeping up an act,'[86] and theatre is an obvious place to draw attention to the performativity of identity itself. And by performativity we mean (following Judith Butler and others) not just conscious performance, but the unconscious repetition and citation of gender and sexual norms. For it is through such repetition that those identities become naturalized and reified, as these scripts are reproduced on the surface of (and through the actions and





gestures of) one's own body. They are thereby internalized, or, more correctly (as Butler, following Foucault, tells us), are 'incorporated' as the truth of one's being, the truth of who we feel we are.[87] Walter Borden's *Tightrope Time: Ain't Nuthin' More Than Some Itty Bitty Madness Between Twilight & Dawn* (2005) successfully plays with identity construction through the use of multiple characters and voices in this one-person show. George Elliott Clarke, in his introduction to the play, reads the gender and identity crossings as 'queer' and political: 'Borden is radically *avant-garde*, for, in African-Canadian literature, male homosexuality receives, rarely, any consummate dramatic and lyrical annunciation.'[88]

In other works, identity construction is manipulated in such a way that theatre itself becomes a way of intervening in historical narratives, replaying them, but with a difference. Jim Bartley, in *Stephen & Mr. Wilde* (1994), takes on what we do and do not know about Oscar Wilde's trip to North America (including Canada) in 1881–82. Wilde travelled with his African-American valet, Stephen Davenport, a former slave and freedom fighter, about whom the public record tells us very little. R.M. Vaughan's *Camera, Woman* (2000) uncovers the life of Dorothy Arzner, a lesbian director of Hollywood movies from the 1920s to the 1940s. Foregrounding the politics of gender, as we have been discussing here, the opening prologue has Arzner claim insightfully that 'a woman is always at her most alluring when she recognizes a single, fundamental truth—all women are performers. During my career in motion pictures I made this my motto. [...] To be a woman is to be perpetually on stage.'[89] Other works that draw attention to the performativity of gender include Michel Marc Bouchard's *Lilies* (1991; translated in 1997 by Linda Gaboriau, known for her translations of many Québécois queer works). Here, a group of prisoners restage an episode from the past and play all the roles of the original people involved. In John Greyson's 1996 film adaptation, 'blind' casting is taken to a new level when Black



and First Nations prisoners take on the roles of members of a small Quebec community just after the turn of the century, when clearly these Québécois would have been white. Such a strategy draws attention to both past and current realties, since dual identities are presented for viewers in marked and unmarked ways in both the play and the film. Kathleen Oliver's *Swollen Tongues* (performed in 1998; reproduced in Rosalind Kerr's *Lesbian Plays: Coming of Age in Canada*, 2006)

> inverts the usual Renaissance/Restoration comedy of errors that occurs when the heroine takes on a transvestite disguise in order to pursue her own desires. Traditionally this androgynous figure inevitably attracts the transgressive affections of another female character who mistakenly believes her to be male. In *Swollen Tongues*, there is no mistake in the protagonist Catherine's sexual attraction to Sonja.[90]

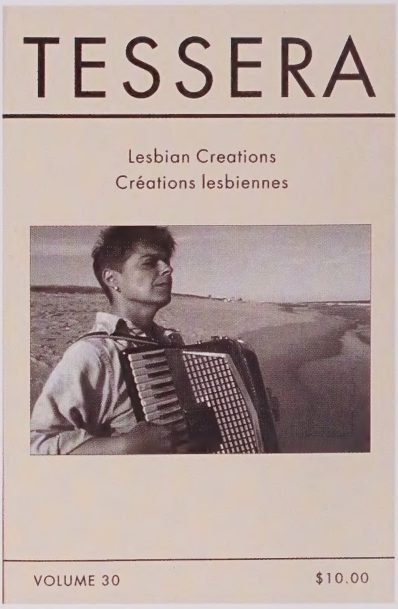
Lisa Walter's *Difference of Latitude* (performed in 1994 and included in *Lesbian Plays*) is another work that foregrounds cross-dressing and performativity—and women's hidden lives—as it tells a story of lesbian love within the context of a woman travelling in disguise on a ship in 1812 to escape a life of domestic drudgery. Nathalie Meisner's *Life and a Lover* (2000; also in *Lesbian Plays*) interrogates the very definition of 'lesbian' when she imagines Virginia Woolf's Orlando as an actual woman and how same-sex desire operated in the relationship between Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, upon whom the character in Woolf's 1928 novel is based.

Sky Gilbert has consistently approached historical figures in his work, overturning the accepted narratives of people such as Roland Barthes, Truman Capote, Constantine Cavafy, Edward Lacey, Leopold and Loeb, Robert Mapplethorpe, Frank O'Hara, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Franz Schubert, Andy Warhol, Tennessee Williams, and others, who are so often framed within a

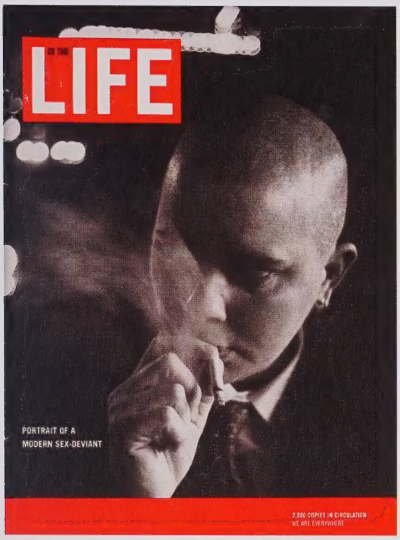
'tragic homosexual' model or are de-gayed and sanitized. If Gilbert asks us to reevaluate those people we thought we knew, and whom he thinks queer people should know as part of their legacy, he does so by putting them back in a queer context, in such a way that their sexuality is not a dirty little secret but a source of pleasure and power. Even if they themselves didn't view their sexuality in that manner, Gilbert politicizes the representation for us, analyzing what forces were at work to make them feel shame or act in particular ways. In the 'drag plays' included here, such as *Susie Goo: Private Secretary* (performed in 1991), or *Drag Queens on Trial* (performed in 1994) and *Drag Queens in Outer Space* (performed in 1990), the unlikely figure of the drag queen—all too often the object of derision (or worse) in both the gay and straight worlds—is the heroine and moral centre of the play, and not simply a buffoon or tragic diva. In this way, Gilbert also explores gay femininity as a source of strength, thereby challenging our assumptions about gender and sexuality. Another interesting example of gender crossing occurs in Colin Thomas's *Sex Is My Religion* (in *Plague of the Gorgeous & Other Tales*, ed. Gordon Armstrong, 1996), in which a mother and her gay son living with HIV/AIDS appear separately, each reciting a monologue; however, it is played with an older woman acting the role of the younger man and vice versa. This defamiliarizing effect is both stunning and devastating, for we hear the son (played by a female actor who would resemble the mother) get into the details of his sexual history and how empowering it was for him, while the mother (played by a younger man) uses her religion to justify her homophobia and explain her son's AIDS-related illness. By literally inhabiting the voice and body of the 'other,' these two characters represent difference at its most extreme. Daniel MacIvor, one of Canada's most inventive playwrights (especially in his collaborations with director Daniel Brooks), also manipulates theatrical convention in his play *In On It* (performed in 2001 and included in *I Still Love You*, 2006, which won a Governor General's Award) to blur the line between art and life by letting the audience 'in on' the day-to-day relationship struggles his two male characters are having, all the while providing us with a metatheatrical look at the play they are trying to write—the narrative they are constructing as a way of making sense of who and what they think they are.

Jovette Marchessault (also a visual artist and sculptor) plays with the historic and the mythic in her works. At times she draws on her Aboriginal heritage to suggest a totemic and spiritual realm quite different from the Catholic-dominated cultural history that Québécois work by queer people and feminists so often confronts. In *Saga of the Wet Hens* (1983; trans. Linda Gaboriau) Marchessault provides a dramatization of the lives of four well-known Québécois female writers—Laure Conan (Félicité Angers), Germaine Guèvremont, Anne Hébert, and Gabrielle Roy—who meet outside of time and space to discuss their lives and creativity. History is again the subject in Alec Butler's *Black Friday?* (written in 1990, when the playwright identified as Audrey Butler), which looks at working-class culture, racism, homophobia, and a father-daughter relationship during an important and divisive union vote in Sydney, Nova Scotia, on 13 October 1967. Don Hannah's plays, three of which are collected in *Shoreline* (1999), also examine generational divides and family conflicts, particularly in the play *Fathers and Sons* (1998).

Other plays explore more painful and emotional experiences of queer lives. For example, a number of plays deal with some of the struggles faced by youth,

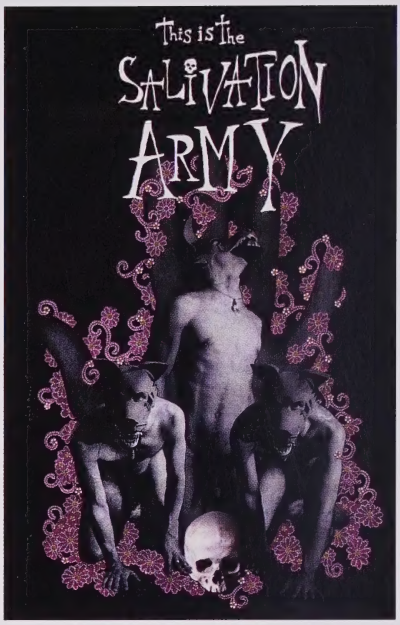


such as substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and coming out, as we see in Morris Panych's *Other Schools of Thought* (1994), or bullying and bashing in Michael Lewis MacLennan's *The Shooting Stage* (2002). When an older gay man loses a young lover to another young man in Bryden MacDonald's East-Coast drama *Whale Riding Weather* (1994), audiences are asked to consider some familiar themes in gay representation about beauty, aging, and loneliness. Alex Bulmer's *Smudge* (performed in 2000 and published in *Lesbian Plays*) deals with a woman who, while trying to navigate a relationship with her lover, must also come to terms with the fact that she is going blind. Diane Flacks, who collaborated with Bulmer on the script for her play, and starred in it, wrote *Random Acts* (performed in 1997 and published in *Lesbian Plays*) about a self-help guru who is tested by her own teachings after an accident leaves her in a wheelchair. Disconnection and dysfunction seem to mark the characters in Brad Fraser's *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love* (1988; filmed in 1993 as *Love and Human Remains*, dir. Denys Arcand) as they negotiate relationships and the creation of art, set amidst a series of killings of women. The changing nature of identity and sexuality and the fears of gay men in the age of AIDS are key themes in John Palmer's *A Day at the Beach* (1987) (paired with the comic 1972 play *The End* in his 1991 collection included here). Margaret Hollingsworth's *Islands* (first performed in 1983 and included in *Willful Acts*, 1985) picks up six months after her earlier lesbian play *Alli Alli Oh* (1977) ends. After a mental breakdown, caused in part by an unhealthy relationship, one woman now reevaluates her connection to her mother and her former lover. What these playwrights do in shaping queer experience into meaningful narratives and performances is make theatre a place to examine and contest identity and the roles we create and play in life and art.



Periodicals and Journals (Case 11)

Lesbian, gay, and feminist bookstores, small presses, and anthologies provide opportunities for queer writers to make their work public. So do magazines, journals, and periodicals, and here we feature the annual literary supplements/issues from important queer publications such as the *Body Politic*, which appeared from 1971 to 1987 and was the forerunner to *Xtra!* (both published by Pink Triangle Press), *Angles* (*The Sodomite Invasion Review*), and *fab*. These publications have showcased new writers alongside their more established colleagues. A number of other Canadian periodicals, such as *ARC*, *Prairie Fire*, and *Room of One's Own*, have either had special queer issues or included significant queer content. *Tessera*, founded in 1984 by Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlatt, Kathy Mezei, and Gail Scott, has been a vital space for creating dialogue about lesbian writing between anglophone and francophone women. *Fireweed* has been another important journal to feature work by and about lesbian art and culture, and indeed became a significant space for lesbians and women of colour under the editorship of Makeda Silvera. We have also included two University of Toronto publications, the queer issue of Victoria College's *Acta Victoriana* (1996) and the Sexual Diversity Studies Student Union's *Commonpeople* (2005). Parodying *Life* magazine, Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's *In the Life* (Finger in the Dyke Productions, 1995) offers a 'Portrait of a Modern Sex Deviant' as it follows a day in the life of a bull-dyke (also produced as a video). Dempsey and Millan have consistently hijacked 'straight' spaces and turned them queer in their multimedia and performance work, as we also see in their Lesbian National Parks and Services project in which they take on the personae of rangers who 'recruit' and interact with visitors to Banff National Park (see their *Lesbian National Parks and Services Field Guide to North America: Flora, Fauna and Survival Skills*, 2002).



'Zines (Case 12)

'Zines (short for fanzines) are perhaps the epitome of queer culture. Political, irreverent, oppositional, and indecipherable to the uninitiated, queer 'zines resist any stable notion of culture or identity. It would be hard to deny that this exhibition does confer a kind of respectability and institutional legitimacy on queer culture—but that is something 'zines defiantly reject. 'We're here, we're queer, come see us in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library!' lacks the edgy, in-your-face political aesthetic and attitude of 'zine culture, to be sure. To put 'zines behind a glass case and treat them with reverence is the antithesis of the way these publications mock and subvert the book culture represented in the rest of the exhibit. Making use of the technology of mass media and print culture, 'zines steal and appropriate images and text for their own uses (disregarding copyright or violating it outright). They are self-published, photocopied and handwritten (not printed), usually unpaginated, not intended to make a profit, and they often don't even have a discernible author or editor—all of which makes any kind of library classification or academic referencing difficult.

Canada can boast of an extremely developed array of 'zines, particularly from the 1980s and 1990s, and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives has one of the largest queer 'zine collections in North America. In Toronto, G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce put *J.D.s* (short for 'Juvenile Delinquents') on the international map from 1985 to 1991 as one of the most influential and recognized 'zines giving voice and representation to 'homocore' (later 'queercore') culture. Incorporating Jones's artwork, LaBruce's film background, and their experiences in the music scene, *J.D.s* became a venue for queering the punk culture[91] that was responsible for the proliferation of 'zines that began in the 1970s. Along with other punk-inflected 'zines such as Kim Kinakin's *Faggo* (2001) and Scott Treleaven's *This Is the Salivation Army* (1996–99), *J.D.s* rejected what it saw as an increasingly assimilationist, homogeneous, and bourgeois gay culture.

Indeed, 'zines in general offer spirited resistance to the way gay and lesbian culture has 'ruthlessly divest[ed itself] of [its] extremities, to sever the troubling parts of homosexuality or sexuality in general. And trouble, in the form of hustlers, transvestites, transsexuals, delinquents, or skinheads, is just what these publications court.'[92] Campy, parodic, and raunchy, many of these 'zines are filled with images lifted from pornography, altering them and tagging them with new messages and meanings. An early 'zine such as *Toronto Rag* (1980–81), by Underground Interests, contains news and ads, Tom of Finland drawings, all done in cut-and-paste style, and was sold at places such as Art Metropole, Glad Day Bookshop, This Ain't the Rosedale Library, University of Toronto Bookstore, and gay bathhouses. *Draghead: Exploring Radical Faeriedom and Fey Arts*, by Charlie Dobie and Peter Zorzi, was one of many productions for the Radical Faeries—gay men who gather at various rural retreats to explore sexuality, femininity, music, dance, magic, and spirituality, including Aboriginal mythology and paganism. Glendon McKinney's *King of the Fairies*, a fanzine in the truest sense, is dedicated to celebrating, gossiping about, and obsessing over the queer icon and bad-boy East-Coast musician Ashley MacIsaac. 'Zines have also been important spaces for transgender culture, and here we've included *Tranzine: The Zine by the Transgendered for Everyone* (2001) and *Little Trany Franny* (by Amanda Kelly and Zine Machine, 1997).

Of course, there is crossover between 'zine and book culture, and several of these 'zines include writings and work by other artists featured in our collection. A good example is Michael Smith (we have featured his 'zine *Cruising*, 2002), whose poetry and prose appear in quite a number of the anthologies in this exhibition, such as *Carnal Nation*, *Contra/diction*, *Queeries*, and *Seminal*. Smith's work is also included in *This Is the Salivation Army*'s specially bound collection (2006), which reprints the 'zine's ten issues (with some additions), and is produced to look like a Bible, with a print run of 666. (It also includes work by AA Bronson, Andy Fabo, John Greyson, G.B. Jones, and Genesis P-Orridge.) 'Zines have also been ideal spaces for visual artists to display and disseminate their work, as we see with the illustrations of Maurice Vellekoop in the 1989 issue of *Fear Comics*. Cheryl Dobinson's *The Fence: A New Place of Power for Bisexual Women* (started in 2004 and still publishing) and G.B. Jones's *Bitch Nation* (1994) have been important spaces for rethinking and challenging the category 'lesbian.'

Conclusion: From Queer to Eternity

If 'zines are an example of counterculture (and counter-discourse), they clearly belong in an exhibit like this, which features voices ranging from the more traditional—in style, form, and politics—to those that have shocked, bucked, and eschewed both the status quo and queer communities. The texts included in this exhibition speak to and against each other in a variety of ways and are representative of the diversity and richness that make up queer culture in this country. It's clear to us that any attempt to put together a queer CanLit exhibit like this in the future would probably look quite different. Although some critics feel that queer culture has been slowly losing its edge or is becoming mainstream, due to a globalized media culture and changes in economics, law, and politics, this collection of works remains a strong testament to what can be achieved when a politics and aesthetics of sexual diversity creates the freedom that artists need,

providing space for and affirmation of who we are and what we have experienced, for better or worse. We continue to need this work. Some would say our very lives depend on it.

NOTES

1 Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman, dirs., *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*, NFB, 1992.

2 'Canon-formation is not literary history. They are ... dialectically opposed critical functions. When we practice literary history, we are relating works to a wider context, to other works, to aspects of the author's personal history or of a broader socio-political history ... and so on. Yet when we ... "elect" a canon of great works of art, we are removing those works from their historical context, and inserting them in an imaginary pantheon that we assume will last forever. A canonical text possesses, we believe, an authority ... a value and a meaning that survives its contextual origins and the "test of time"' (Trevor Ross, qtd. in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter [New York: St. Martin's P, 1989] 1285).

3 In the introduction to her anthology *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literatures in English*, 2nd ed., Smaro Kamboureli argues, for example, that '[t]he unity of Canadian identity is a cultural myth, a myth that can be sustained only by eclipsing the identities of others' (Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP, 2007) xxvii. For more on the recent debates over Canadian literary history and the canon, see her *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP, 2000); Robert Lecker, ed., *Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991); Frank Davey, *Canadian Literary Power* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1994); Robert Lecker, *Making It Real: The Canonization of English-Canadian Literature* (Concord, ON: Anansi, 1995); Lynette Hunter, *Outsider Notes: Feminist Approaches to Nation State Ideology, Writers/Readers and Publishing* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1996); Arun Mukherjee, *Postcolonialism: My Living* (Toronto: TSAR, 1998); Jonathan Kertzer, *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998); Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' P, 2000); and W.H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2003).

4 Because it is not Fisher's policy to collect children's literature, one work will have to serve as a small gesture towards a much larger body of rich and diverse work in this field.

5 L. Pauline Rankin, 'Sexualities and National Identities: Re-Imagining Queer Nationalism,' *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35.2 (Summer 2000): 176.

6 Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 2002) 48.

7 Martin Cannon, 'The Regulation of First Nations Sexuality,' *Sexing the Maple: A Canadian Sourcebook*, ed. Richard Cavell and Peter Dickinson (Peterborough, ON: Broadview P, 2006) 280.

8 Also see *Without Reservation: Indigenous Erotica*, ed. Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Wiarton, ON: Kegedonce P, 2003), which includes some Canadian queer content with the work of Scofield, Brant, and Moses.

9 E.A. Lacey, 'Saudade,' *Path of Snow: Poems, 1951–1973* (Scarborough, ON: Ahasuerus Press, 1974) 59.

10 Robert K. Martin, 'Cheap Tricks in Montreal: Scott Symons's *Place d'Armes*,' *Essays on Canadian Writing* 54 (Winter 1994): 198.

11 Martin, 'Cheap Tricks' 198.

12 Similar migrations took place from the United States in the nineteenth century, by writers such as Henry James and Edith Wharton, and were echoed later with the writers of the 'lost generation,' including T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein.

13 Peter McGehee, *Sweetheart* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1992) 77.

14 Rankin 192.

15 Linda Hutcheon, 'Rethinking the National Model,' *Rethinking Literary History: A Dialogue on Theory*, ed. Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés (New York: Oxford UP, 2002) 4.
16 Hutcheon 42, n. 117.
17 Robert K. Martin, 'Gay Literature,' *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. Eugene Benson and William Toye (Don Mills, ON: Oxford UP, 1997) 449.
18 Douglas Chambers, 'Canadian Literature in English,' *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage: A Reader's Companion to the Writers and Their Works, from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Claude J. Summers (New York: Henry Holt, 1995) 136.
19 A number of critics have argued that Anthony Minghella's 1996 film version, starring Ralph Fiennes and Kristin Scott Thomas, is the greatest cinematic love story since *Casablanca* (1942).
20 Becki Ross, 'A Lesbian Politics of Erotic Decolonization,' *Painting the Maple: Essays on Race, Gender, and the Construction of Canada*, ed. Veronica Strong-Boag, Sherrill Grace, Avigail Eisenberg, and Joan Anderson (Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1998) 191.
21 Linda Revie, 'Pauline Johnson's Sapphic Wampum,' *torquere: Journal of the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Studies Association* 4-5 (2002/2003): 38–62.
22 See the published version: Laura M. Robinson, 'Bosom Friends: Lesbian Desire in Montgomery's Anne Books,' *Canadian Literature* 180 (2004): 12–28.
23 Robinson 26–27, n. 5.
24 Cecily Devereux, '"Canadian Classic" and "Commodity Export": The Nationalism of "our" Anne of Green Gables,' *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36.1 (Spring 2001): 24–25; also see her 'Anatomy of a "National Icon": *Anne of Green Gables* and the '"Bosom Friends" Affair,' *Making Avonlea: L.M. Montgomery and Popular Culture*, ed. Irene Gammel (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002) 32–42. Interestingly, Margaret Atwood wrote a piece in the *New York Times* a decade and a half earlier, suggesting something similar; see 'That Certain Thing Called the Girlfriend,' *NYT* 11 May 1986: 3, 38.
25 Tom Hastings, 'Gay and Lesbian Writing,' *The Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, ed. William H. New (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002) 419.
26 Caro Soles, interview with Louise Guardino, *Sisters in Crime*, 1 June 1998, 6 Jan. 2008 <http://www.sinc-ic.org/spoto798.shtml>.
27 John Barton, introduction, *Seminal: The Anthology of Canada's Gay Male Poets*, ed. John Barton and Billeh Nickerson (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp P, 2007) 11.
28 Barton 27.
29 Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, 'The Reproduction of Butch-Fem Roles: A Social Constructionist Approach,' *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*, ed. Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons with Robert A. Padgug (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989) 241.
30 Hutcheon 10.
31 Nathalie Cooke, 'Energy, Emotion, and Perspective: An Interview with Nicole Brossard,' *Gay and Lesbian Poetry in Canada*, spec. issue of *ARC* 32 (Spring 1994): 58.
32 Daphne Marlatt, foreword, *Salvage* (Red Deer, AB: Red Deer College P, 1991) 11.
33 As with all of Lepage's work, each play is considered 'in progress.' *Le Polygraphe* was first performed in French in 1988, and in English in 1989 (as *Polygraph*), and has been printed in English three times (trans. Gyllian Ruby), each with some variation. Lepage directed a film version in 1996.
34 Jerry Wasserman, ed., *Modern Canadian Plays*, 4th ed., vol. 2 (Burnaby, BC: Talonbooks, 2001) 67.
35 Patricia Smart, 'The (In?)Compatibility of Gender and Nation in Canadian and Québécois Feminist Writing,' *Essays on Canadian Writing* 54 (Winter 1994): 14–15.
36 Cooke 60.
37 Tomson Highway, 'A Note on the Trickster,' *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1998) n. pag.
38 Carl Morse and Joan Larkin, introduction, 'A Conversation with Carl Morse and Joan Larkin,' *Gay and Lesbian Poetry in Our Time: An Anthology*, ed. Carl Morse and Joan Larkin (New York: St. Martin's P, 1988) xvi.
39 Shyam Selvadurai, *Funny Boy* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994) 4–5.

40 Selvadurai 11.
41 Camilla Gibb, 'On All Fours in Brooklyn,' *Carnal Nation: Brave New Sex Fictions*, ed. Carellin Brooks and Brett Josef Grubisic (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp P, 2000) 139, 140.
42 Peter Dickinson (quoting Madeleine Kahn), *Here Is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999) 18.
43 For example, we have not featured a work by Katherine Forrest, who, though born in Windsor, Ontario, seems to have produced all of her best-selling lesbian detective fiction in the United States, where she now lives. Nor have we featured a separate text by Elsa Gidlow (whose *On a Grey Thread* [1923] is thought to be the first lesbian poetry collection in the United States), since she was born in England, lived in Canada briefly, and, according to her 1985 autobiography, *Elsa, I Come with My Songs*, never particularly claimed this country as her own. However, Gidlow's work is included in the special lesbian and gay poetry issue of *ARC* that appears in the journals and periodicals section.
44 Dionne Brand, qtd. in Carol Morrell, ed., *Grammar of Dissent: Poetry and Prose by Claire Harris, M. Nourbese Philip, and Dionne Brand* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1994) 170.
45 Hutcheon 7.
46 See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford UP, 1973). Taking a different tack, Robert K. Martin, in his groundbreaking study *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*, argues that '[t]he homosexual poet often seeks poetic "fathers" who in one sense offer a validation of his sexual nature. Whatever he may learn poetically from the great tradition, he cannot fail to notice that this tradition is, at least on the surface, almost exclusively heterosexual' (Austin: U of Texas P, 1979) 148.
47 Elizabeth Brady, 'Voices from the Periphery: First-Generation Lesbian Fiction in Canada,' *Resources for Feminist Research* 12.1 (March 1983): 23.
48 Martin, 'Gay Literature' 452.
49 Martin, 'Gay Literature' 453.
50 For more, see the excellent discussion by Barton in *Seminal* 16–17.
51 Barton 17.
52 John Sutherland, qtd. in Barton 14.
53 Barton 15. For more on the Anderson affair, see Robert K. Martin, 'Sex and Politics in Wartime Canada: The Attack on Patrick Anderson,' *Essays on Canadian Writing* 44 (1991): 110–25; David Leahy, 'Patrick Anderson and John Sutherland's Hetero-realism: "Some Sexual Experience of a Kind Not Normal,"' *Essays on Canadian Writing* 62 (Fall 1997): 132–49; and Dickinson 69–100.
54 Patrick Anderson, 'Drinker,' *A Tent for April* (Montreal: First Statement, 1945) n. pag.
55 Robert K. Martin, 'Two Days in Sodom: or, How Anglo-Canadian Writers Invent Their Own Quebecs,' *Body Politic* 35 (1977): 29.
56 Terry Goldie, *Pink Snow: Homotextual Possibilities in Canadian Fiction* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview P, 2003) 92.
57 Jack McClelland, letter to Leonard Cohen, *Imagining Canadian Literature: The Selected Letters of Jack McClelland*, ed. Sam Solecki (Toronto: Key Porter, 1998) 101–102.
58 Dickinson 78.
59 See Martin, 'Cheap Tricks' 198–211.
60 Not to be confused with cinema studies professor Thomas Waugh at Concordia University, author of *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* (2000) and *The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas* (2006).
61 Barton 18–19.
62 Gary Geddes, 'Webb, Phyllis,' Benson and Toye 1172–73.
63 Jason Weiss, introduction, *Back in No Time: The Brion Gysin Reader*, ed., Jason Weiss (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2001) ix.
64 Andrew Lesk, 'Having a Gay Old Time in Paris: John Glassco's Not-So-Queer Adventures,' *In a Queer Country: Gay & Lesbian Studies in the Canadian Context*, ed. Terry Goldie (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp P, 2001) 176. For another analysis of Glassco's queerness, see Richard Dellamora, 'Queering Modernism: A Canadian in Paris,' *Essays on Canadian Writing* 60 (Winter 1996): 256–73.

65 Lesk 176.
66 Lesk 177.
67 Andy Quan, 'Years of the Quiet Son: The Continuing Legacy of Ian Young,' *Gay and Lesbian Poetry in Canada*, spec. issue of *ARC* 32 (Spring 1994): 19.
68 Tim Carlson, 'bill bissett,' *bill bissett: Essays on His Works*, ed. Linda Rogers (Toronto: Guernica, 2002) 46.
69 Linda Rogers, introduction, 'bill bissett's Molecular Dissolve,' Rogers 8.
70 Stephen Scobie, 'bissett, bill,' Benson and Toye 124.
71 Daryl Hine, *The Devil's Picture Book: Poems* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1960) 14.
72 Robert K. Martin, 'Coming Full Circle: Daryl Hine's Recent Poems,' *Modern Poetry Studies* 8 (1977): 69.
73 Neil Carson, 'Sexuality and Identity in *Fortune and Men's Eyes*,' *Twentieth Century Literature* 18.3 (Summer 1972): 209.
74 For a summary and analysis of the debate, see Elaine Pigeon, '*Hosanna!* Michel Tremblay's Queering of National Identity,' Goldie, *In a Queer Country* 27–49.
75 Dionne Brand, 'Unredeemed Grace: Eva Tihanyi Speaks with Dionne Brand,' *Books in Canada* (March 1997): 8.
76 Audre Lorde, 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury,' *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing P, 1984) 37.
77 Erin Mouré, *Furious* (Toronto: Anansi, 1988) 36.
78 Dionne Brand, 'No Language Is Neutral,' *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*, ed. Frank Birbalsingh (London: Macmillan, 1996) 135.
79 Janice Williamson, '"can't we talk about the Alberta flag?" A Conversation between Erin Mouré and Janice Williamson,' *Prairie Fire* 13.4 (Winter 1992/1993): 79.
80 Nathalie Stephens, *Touch to Affliction* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2006) 16.
81 Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998) 376, 378.
82 Dorothy Livesay, 'Towards a Love Poem,' *Feeling the Worlds: New Poems* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1984) 34.
83 Douglas LePan, 'Broken Music,' *Far Voyages: Poems* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990) 46.
84 Michael Lynch, 'Yellow Kitchen Gloves,' *These Waves of Dying Friends: Poems* (New York: Contact II Publications, 1989) 92.
85 Alan Sinfield, *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 1.
86 Sinfield 9.
87 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 137–38.
88 George Elliott Clarke, foreword, *Tightrope Time: Ain't Nuthin' More Than Some Itty Bitty Madness Between Twilight & Dawn*, by Walter Borden (Toronto: Playwrights Canada P, 2005) ii.
89 R.M. Vaughan, *Camera, Woman: A Play in Two Acts* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2000) 6–7.
90 Rosalind Kerr, ed., *Lesbian Plays: Coming of Age in Canada* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada P, 2006) 261.
91 Rob Teixeira, 'Punk-lad Love, Dyke-core and the Evolution of Queer Zine Culture in Canada,' *Broken Pencil* 9 (Spring 1999), 10 Feb. 2008 <http://www.brokenpencil.com/features/feature.php?featureid=51>.
92 Matias Viegener, '"Kinky Escapades, Bedroom Techniques, Unbridled Passion, and Secret Sex Codes,"' *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*, ed. David Bergman (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1993) 241.

Images from the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives National Portrait Collection
(Maclean-Hunter Reading Room)

In honour of its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1998, the CLGA began commissioning artists to represent prominent figures in the queer community who have made important contributions to queer culture, politics, and activism in Canada. Nominations for the collection are made by community members, and those who are selected as inductees then choose an artist to represent them in any medium. The collection, now made up of approximately seventy works, has travelled across Canada and we are pleased to feature the portraits of a number of writers in our exhibition.

Persimmon Blackbridge. Black-and-white photographic print by Susan Stewart, 1998.
Audrey (now Alec) Butler. Black-and-white photographic print by Simone Jones, 1998.
C.M. Donald (now Hilary Clare). Colour photographic print by Gail Kenney, 2005.
Tomson Highway. Watercolour by Stephen Yeates, 2000.
Ann-Marie MacDonald. Colour photographic print by Nigel Dickson, 2000.
Jovette Marchessault. Black-and-white photographic print by Robert Laliberté, 1998.
Shani Mootoo. Black-and-white photographic print by Susan Stewart, 1998.
Shyam Selvadurai. Acrylic on board by Jock MacRae, 1998.
Makeda Silvera. Mixed media image by Stephanie Martin, 1998.

Photographs from the Robert Giard Collection
(silver gelatin prints, Maclean-Hunter Reading Room)

Robert Giard (1939–2002) photographed over six hundred queer authors as part of his 'Particular Voices: Portraits of Gay and Lesbian Writers' series (1985–2002). With a B.A. in English from Yale (1961), and an M.A. in Comparative Literature from Boston University (1965), Giard was well tuned to appreciate the unique contributions of queer writers in giving shape, representation, and voice to queer identity, culture, and community. We are honoured that the Giard Foundation, represented by his executor and life-partner, Jonathan Silin, and the Stephen Bulger Gallery have allowed us to include a number of the Canadian writers he photographed.

Beth Brant (Degonwadonti), 1990
Nicole Brossard, 1992
Daryl Hine, 1993
Richard Labonté, 1989
Michael Lynch, 1984
Mary Meigs, 1992
Jane Rule, 1994

Case One: Pioneers, to 1975

Patrick Anderson (1915–1979). *A Tent for April: Poems*. New Writers Series No. 2. Montreal: First Statement, 1945.

bill bissett (1939–). *pomes for yoshi*. Vancouver: blewointmentpress, 1972.

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Robin Blaser (1925–). *The Holy Forest: Collected Poems of Robin Blaser*. Rev. and expanded ed. Ed. Miriam Nichols. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.

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John Herbert's Underwood typewriter, used to write *Fortune and Men's Eyes* and other works.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to the many people who helped out with and supported this project in a variety of ways. Some lent or donated books for the display, others offered advice about which texts to include and why they were important, while still others here at University of Toronto and elsewhere worked hard to make this exhibition come together in such an extraordinary way: Jim Bartley, Heidi Darroch, Chris Fox, Sky Gilbert, Barbara Godard, Anjula Gogia, Paul Halferty, Catherine Lake, Andrew Lesk, Julie Murray, Robert Wallace, and Ian Young. We would also like to acknowledge various institutions: Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (particularly Mary MacDonald and Robert Windrum); Canadian Scholars' Press (Jack Wayne and Susan Silva-Wayne); Coach House Printing (Stan Bevington); Robert Giard Foundation (Jonathan Silin); The Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto (particularly David Rayside); Stephen Bulger Gallery; Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto (particularly Sandra Alston, Gabriela Bravo, Pearce Carefoote, Anne Dondertman, Linda Joy, and Richard Landon). Scott would also like to thank Anthony Collins, Doris Cowan, Maureen FitzGerald, and Don McLeod for being such careful and generous readers of this essay.

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to reproduce the images in this catalogue, and we would like to thank the following publishers and individuals: Arsenal Pulp Press, Back Room/Baskerville Books, Persimmon Blackbridge, Canadian Scholars' Press/ Women's Press, Canadian Women's Educational Press, Coach House Books, Cormorant Books, Dell (New York), Douglas & McIntyre, Finger in the Dyke Productions (Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan), Forever Comics (*Little Trany Franny*), Grove Press (New York), Harvest House, Macmillan of Canada, McClelland & Stewart, Glendon McKinney (*King of the Fairies*), NeWest Press, Playwrights Canada Press, Press Gang Publishers, *Room of One's Own*, Estate of Jane Rule, Talonbooks, *Tessera*, Thomas Allen Publishers (Toronto), Scott Treleaven (*This Is the Salivation Army*), TSAR, Viking (Toronto) and b.h. Yael.

The Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies,
University of Toronto

The Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, housed in University College, offers an undergraduate program, a collaborative graduate program (M.A. and Ph.D.), hosts academic and community events, and promotes research into sexuality. It is a hub forging connections among faculty, undergraduates, graduate students, and community members interested in questions about how we understand sexual identity and sexual practices.

Among these questions are how we frame and categorize sexual differences, why we fear some and celebrate others, how medical, religious, and political authorities respond to them. What is the nature of sexual identity and orientation? How and why is sexuality labelled as lesbian, heterosexual, perverse, normal, gay, or queer? How do cultures at different times and places divide the sexual from the non-sexual?

SDS provides opportunities to explore these questions across disciplinary boundaries, by the courses it sponsors, the programs it offers, and the public presentations it organizes. Faculty members associated with SDS come from about twenty departments and programs, including English, Political Science, Women's Studies, History, Medieval Studies, Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology, Criminology, Education, Visual Studies, Social Work, East Asian Studies, Linguistics, and Aboriginal Studies.

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